

From: Aidan Ackerman [mailto:ackerman.aidan@gmail.com]
Sent: Wednesday, November 27, 2013 11:30 AM
To: Brestrup, Christine
Subject: Comments on The Retreat

Christine,

Hi! I am writing to send you my thoughts on the proposed development of The Retreat. I was pleased to see that you have asked for comments on this proposed plan, and hope that you receive a wide range of opinions and voices.

I grew up in Amherst, and consider it an extremely special place to have called home. I am still very close friends with the people I knew at ARHS, and am in constant contact with these people, who I consider lifelong friends. My wife and I currently reside in Boston, and had always considered Amherst to be the place where we would settle down and start a family. She and I both have robust careers in Boston, with terminal degrees in our respective fields. While Boston is a great place to live in our early 30s, we find the mix of small town life, cultural diversity, and prominence of higher education to be what makes Amherst a unique and appealing place to settle down. Both she and I see potential in living in the Valley; I as a college professor, and her as a nonprofit worker. The Valley has much to offer us, and we had thought Amherst would be the perfect place to call home.

We had both hoped that our children could study in the Amherst Public School system, and one day say the same things that I could about the friends they made there. Unfortunately, upon learning of the Town's significant support of The Retreat, we can no longer consider Amherst a community worth inhabiting. If this plan were to go through, we would reject any notion of Amherst as a community with long-term vision beyond serving the student population in the interest of economic growth. The proposal for The Retreat is wholly out of sync with the town's Master Plan from 2010. The very fact that The Retreat is even conceivable relies on a technical loophole - these structures, separated by mere feet, can fall into the category of single residences. Any rational person would be aware that these individual residences will function essentially as one large dormitory. The Town's refusal to face this reality is shameful.

It is regretful that any one person would allow this proposal to get as far as it has.

Simultaneously, the region's newspapers display constant headlines detailing out-of-control parties, violent arrests, drunk driving, and few penalties or other action taken. I was married in Whately this Labor Day weekend, and on the night of my wedding, drunk drivers crashed in front of my parents' house. Predictably, they were college students. Amidst this madness, the town seems poised to facilitate the creation of a development where, far from the town's center and any mode of public or walking transit, hundreds of students will have the space, facilities, and opportunity to create social gatherings on a scale not yet seen in this town. That a few dozen residents have voiced opposition does not seem to matter. This is the reason why Amherst no longer holds any value for my wife and I, and many of our city-dwelling friends who once considered moving back. To see a scenario unfold where one could move to Amherst, raise a family, and then helplessly watch as developers enact a plan to forever transform the character of their backyards and communal gathering spaces is to see the destruction of a town's moral fabric.

My wife and I will still move to The Valley as planned, but not to Amherst. We would have been willing taxpayers, high income earners, community participants: the type of residents any town should want to attract. However, Amherst is no longer a place that seems to value those who call it home for more than 4 years. There are many attractive nearby towns that seem much more like the place I thought Amherst was: Greenfield, Turners Falls, Florence to name a few.

We have learned through conversation that many other young professionals we know are evaluating Amherst in the same negative light - far more than perhaps the Town planners are aware of. Proceed with The Retreat, and then observe as the Town of Amherst becomes known solely for its parties, police reports, and bar scene. I hope you consider the long-term impact of your decisions on the Town's image as you evaluate the proposal for The Retreat.

Best,

Aidan and Maura Ackerman

235A Pine ST
Amherst MA 01002

Christine Brestrup, Senior Planner
Dept of Conservation and Development
Town Hall, 4 Boltwood Ave
Amherst MA 01002

Dear Ms. Brestrup,

We are writing to express opposition to the proposed Preliminary Plan filed by Landmark Properties and to express concern about the problems associated with the Plan. Here are some of our concerns:

- 1) **The Yield Plan (Landmark's number is 123) is too high and is not based on sufficient information.** It is likely too large because it assumes that a standard subdivision could be built to fill the entire property. The wetlands, streams and stream crossings and their associated buffers need to be delineated by the Conservation Commission before any determination of the number of lots allowed by right in a subdivision and a cluster subdivision plan is proposed.
- 2) This project is primarily in the R-O zoning district, with a small portion in R-N. **Landmark's plan for a cluster development requests that the Planning Board grant exceptions to the Zoning Bylaw on most of the critical zoning requirements.** Frontage and setbacks would be slashed by more than half: Min frontage 40' (vs. 100 ft required); front setback 10' (vs. 20 ft required); side setback 5' (vs 15 required), rear setback 10' (vs 15 required). This would create an extremely dense use of land with inadequate setback for privacy or safety. It would also allow for more vehicles to be parked in this small front setback than is normally allowed (>2) making it To accept such drastic changes in the zoning requirements would demonstrate a complete lack of commitment to and respect for the bylaws of the Town and goes against the very reason that the Planning Board exists. It would set a dangerous precedent for future developers to ignore the zoning standards, and it would be more difficult to preserve the zoning standards in the future.
- 3) **Roads as proposed would be very unsafe within the development.** Assuming 123 building footprints with 175 units and 641 bedrooms, we can expect over 600 cars to be entering and exiting daily, parking, digging out from snow, driving on icy roads. The proposed slope allowance of 10% exceeds required 8% and would be dangerous especially when being navigated by large numbers of inexperienced drivers under icy and snowy conditions. The length of two major cul de sacs is nearly double the allowed cds road length (1400 instead of 800') which endangers residents in several ways. Storms that might block roads with snow, ice or debris would isolate residents with no way to get out, and no way for public service vehicles such as police, fire and ambulance to get in. How would firefighters get in if a fire occurred when roads were blocked due to weather, to resident's cars, or by residents themselves as might often occur with large parties? How could police effectively disperse a rowdy destructive party scene with one single, long entrance to an area? How would an ambulance reach a student with a severe health problem? In the case of a power outage of some length, which is sure to occur at some point, how would such a dense population of students, living on their own for the first time in a dense apartment setting, manage to take care of their needs for shelter, heat, water, and food without risk of fire, or injury to person or property? How are the safety needs of pedestrians addressed? One of the exceptions requested is to park two vehicles in each (reduced) front setback. How are the entry, exit and pedestrian risks of this parking plan being addressed?

- 4) **Traffic impact.** Has an impact study been requested and done for the surrounding roads? How will 600-1000 additional trips across these roads affect the safety, maintenance cost of these roads? Will traffic lights be needed in Cushman and at the corner of Flat Hills, Shutesbury and Henry/NE Street? Will these intersections require re-design? If so, who will pay for this? What impact will this massive increase have on the safety, quality of life and access to roadway for all the residents along each of these routes? How will the safety of children and parents dropping off kids at Cushman Scott Children's Center be affected? The planning board must require a full traffic impact study including additional costs to the town for infrastructure and policing. Information should be collected about Pine St current traffic only when the road is open during commuting hours. Counts should not be made mid-day, nor when roads are closed, and during periods when UMass is in full session. What accommodation has been made for pedestrians along the roadways – are there sidewalks?
- 5) **Landmark proposes making the roads private, but all residential roads in Amherst should be public.** They should be policed by the Town and subject to town laws such as open container laws. They should be open to the public, not restricted or gated. Historically, large concentrations of student populations need policing and ambulance services.
- 6) **Protection of sensitive areas and wildlife are not delineated.** What protections are in place for the salamander populations in the woods and on roadways? How are stream crossings to be designed, streams and water quality protected, and runoff managed? Will there be increased runoff onto sensitive areas within, and outside the development as a result of pavement, building coverage, and inadequate drainage design? Will road salt or other pollutants flow into the streams, and continue downstream? What buffers exist around the streams and wetlands? How will that space, and other open space within the development be owned and managed?

Although this is submitted as a regular residential housing development, Landmark Properties 'Retreat' line of developments, and their marketing message in the area, makes clear that this housing is intended for UMass Students. Our overall concern is that a large student housing project, highly concentrated on a previously undeveloped forest area surrounded by low-density family housing does NOT belong in the RO district. This concentrated student development will permanently alter the character of this recognized historic district of Amherst and its nearby neighborhoods. It will transform all of North Amherst through a cascade of student housing as homes lose their value, and become attractive only as rentals in a district overrun by the hard wear and tear of students. That cascade will likely overrun all of Pine St and E. Pleasant St. This housing belongs close to campus or on campus, not in an outlying residential zone. It is contrary to the Master Plan which has been endorsed by the Planning Board and Town Meeting. It does not concentrate development in areas that are already built up, in village and town centers and near campuses, where public transportation is available.

The Planning Board has a responsibility to uphold the letter and the intent of the zoning bylaw on behalf of the citizens of Amherst and the long term public interest of the whole town. We urge the planning Board to **require the developer to adhere fully to regulations and bylaws of the town in their plan, and to mitigate all of the potential negative impacts of this development in their proposals.**

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Ruth Hazzard and Claude Tellier

claudetellier0611@gmail.com; 413 256 1721; rhazzard@umext.umass.edu; 413 427 3067

From: Craig Meadows [mailto:cmeadows@ctienergyservices.com]
Sent: Tuesday, December 03, 2013 12:00 PM
To: Brestrup, Christine
Subject: The Retreat

Dear Christine,

We would like to express our concerns over the proposed siting of the development known as "The Retreat".

We drive through that area often both in my car and on bicycle. Siting that many student apartments on a narrow road on which drivers go too fast even now would jeopardize the safety of both motorists and bikers. Without bike lanes on Henry, North East Street and in Cushman, this siting will become a hazard for anyone attempting to bike in the area.

The site will require an abnormally large number of waivers and in the long run this location for student residences will require a number of new stop lights: Cushman Center, East Pleasant and Pine and Strong and North East Street. This should not be an expense that the Town of Amherst is to bear.

We would appreciate your considering these problems in the Planning Board's deliberations.

Sincerely,
Craig and Pamela Meadows
112 Cottage Street
Amherst

Dear Friends:

Granting of waivers for the Landmark project will create many non-conforming lots/structures. Our bylaw allows increasing non-conforming uses and structures under Section 9.22 **if and only if** the result is not substantially more detrimental to the neighborhood, but allowing the creation of non-conforming structures and/or uses is not permissible. To do so may not pass judicial muster as it negates the very need and purpose for zoning!

Citing section 4.12 of the bylaw: **"Dimensional requirements established for building lots** in the applicable zoning district(s) and under the applicable development method **shall remain in full force and effect and shall not be altered by the provisions of this section.**" And under 4.3230 ". . . the Dimensional Regulations of Table 3 shall be complied with." Table 3 allows an increase in density for projects with a minimum of 10% affordable housing but I have not learned that any affordable units have been proposed here.

Footnotes A and K particularly contradict and negate all of the above requirements by allowing variances for frontage, front and side-yard setbacks. To obtain a permit for a single family home (allowed by right) building plans must conform to all the dimensional requirements of the zoning bylaw and no such construction can occur on in-fill lots of insufficient area. So why and how can large developers of many units with huge economic and sociological impact on the Town be allowed to skirt these very same laws?

I need not remind you that even though the current developers ask to keep the subdivision roads private, a future owner could ask they be accepted as public ways. At least three of the cul-de-sac roads appear considerably longer than the allowed length for flag lot driveways and others have grades not negotiable by emergency vehicles. Please exercise your power to disallow substandard roads which could become Town liabilities. In conclusion I point out that none of the approved Chapter 40B developments in Town have asked for the number of waivers being asked by Landmark. The Planning Board must require compliance with the subdivision regulations as well as our zoning bylaw. You might just induce Landmark to come up with a definitive subdivision plan that will be acceptable to the Town and to the abutters.

Hilda B. Greenbaum
298 Montague Road
North Amherst.

From: Jack Hirsch [mailto:hirsch.ja@gmail.com]
Sent: Monday, December 02, 2013 3:24 PM
To: Brestrup, Christine; Planning Department Email
Subject: letter for the Planning Board

December 2, 2013

To the Planning Board:

My wife and I are abutters to the Cows property for which the Retreat has been proposed. We are strongly opposed to this subdivision, and believe it should not be allowed in the R-O zone since Amherst zoning bylaw limits this type of use to the R-F zone. I believe it is within the purview of the Planning Board to make that determination.

We bought land in the R-O zone believing that zoning bylaw protected our investment. We thought it safe to spend all our savings to invest in real estate which would provide a suitable home for our family and hopefully some security for our retirement years. Although there was a good deal of open land on the street and in the area, we felt secure in knowing that the R-O designation would prevent less desirable uses than single family homes to affect our property investment.

When we received the abutters letter from Landmark on February 25, 2013 announcing a "by right" subdivision on the 150 acres behind our house, we were astounded. How was this possible, without even a special permit? What about our protection? As a tax paying resident since 1979, I feel very alienated in a town who allows an out of state developer such a right without even the possibility of input from the residents who will be most affected. So we must rely on our citizen boards to look out for our interests; that's why so many are planning to attend and have written letters expressing their concerns. We have no alternative but to ask that you Planning Board members advocate for our neighborhood – keep it as safe and low density as possible, holding Landmark to the letter of the applicable zoning bylaws.

Thank you,

Jack Hirsch

From: Matthew Bouwer [mailto:mbouwer@umass.edu]
Sent: Monday, December 02, 2013 5:06 PM
To: Brestrup, Christine
Subject: UMass Student concerns about the retreat.

To whom it may concern,

Hello I am Matthew Bouwer, a student at the University of Massachusetts writing with concerns of the retreat. The map that is provided with the preliminary plan is not accurate. The map is not to scale, and to claim that the wooded areas and wetlands will be preserved so close to residential lots is absurd. I doubt very little research had been done ecologically and there is no way that the results of fragmentation, human interference, and edge effect will not have drastic effects on this habitat. Historical Cushman is natural resource. This project will destroy the entirety of this ecosystem and resource for the people in the area.

To quote Gifford Pinchot "Unless we practice conservation, those who come after us will have to pay the price of misery, degradation, and failure for the progress and prosperity of our day."

Do not permit this tragedy to happen. It is not beneficial to the community in any way and it is purely an abuse of the land and the community for profit.

From: John Jackson [mailto:johnj@external.umass.edu]
Sent: Monday, December 02, 2013 2:38 PM
To: Brestrup, Christine
Subject: 'The Retreat'

Hi Christine,

My name is John Jackson and I'm a homeowner and resident of 1063 N. Pleasant St. in Amherst. I'm writing to voice my opposition to 'The Retreat'. North Pleasant St. in North Amherst is already busy with more than enough motor vehicle traffic. I can only imagine what that would increase to with the addition of a student housing development in Cushman with parking for 768 vehicles. That's not a pretty thought. Also, I was a resident of Puffton Village for 10 years. Now, living across the street from it, plus being in close proximity to Hobart Lane and the other nearby student-heavy housing complexes, I can say with certainty that the kinds of nuisance problems common to large concentrations of college students living in the same neighborhood will expand to include the Cushman area if The Retreat is allowed to be built. Please trust the wisdom of the zoning prohibition on locating student housing developments in the Residential Outlying zoned areas of town. Please do everything within your abilities to resist the efforts of those who wish to build 'The Retreat'.

Sincerely,

John Jackson
1063 N. Pleasant St.
Amherst, MA 01002-1323
Cell: 413-530-5445

From: John R White [mailto:johnr.white3@gmail.com]
Sent: Monday, December 02, 2013 2:04 PM
To: Brestrup, Christine
Subject: Comments on the Retreat in Cushman area

Dear Select Board Member,

Over the 32 years I have lived in Amherst, I have seen the town struggle with the relationship between the student population and permanent residents. As you might expect, there has been a mixture of good and bad decisions and developments. The idea of creating a large apartment complex in a semi-rural area of town, near a historic section of town that still retains a good sense of its quiet and small town nature, has to rank high on the "bad decision" scale.

A heavy concentration of students in this area of town, which currently contains a very small percentage of the student population that live outside campus boundaries, in a setting that is being billed as a retreat (i.e., vacation and party spot) set in an otherwise pristine natural forest area, I believe will prove to be a disaster. It is a very self-serving (on the part of the development company) and short-sighted concept for answering the housing questions surrounding the student population. I believe it is creating a scenario that will weigh heavily on the town's public services, specifically the police and fire departments but also public works.

More specifically, I have been informed that the project violates some zoning bylaws, is totally out of character with the established neighborhood (see the master plan), and lacks due diligence related to environmental regulations and concerns.

I urge the Planning Board to think first of the permanent residents of the community, protect the integrity of an established neighborhood, and seek a more creative and amenable solution to the student housing needs in the community. This project only benefits those with the financial gain in mind, not the larger community.

Thank you for your consideration.

Best regards,

John White
Stanley Street

From: Ann Cooper-Ciccarelli [mailto:ascocooper@yahoo.com]
Sent: Sunday, December 01, 2013 5:56 PM
To: Brestrup, Christine
Subject: RESIDENTS AGAINST THE RETREAT

Ms. Brestrup,

We are land abutters near where the Retreat is being proposed in North Amherst. The plans for this development threaten all that we love in this area. There is peace, quiet, and nature. It is blissful. It is the reason we purchased a home a few miles from town. There are horse farms, and frog ponds, and hiking trails. All I hear when I step out from my doors are birds or other wildlife. It is the house my husband and I purchased 7 years ago to raise our kids. We bought the house before my 2 children were born, and this is the only house they have known. I don't worry about parties, violence, traffic and trash.

The small, local streets will be overrun with traffic, pollution, noise and drunk driving. There will be no room for bikers and walkers. The streets are not equipped to handle the kind of traffic volume that the Retreat will bring. Street layouts being proposed for the Retreat are inadequate and unsafe. Landmark has requested modifications to important safety features that Amherst usually demands of a developer of new roads.

The Retreat violates R-O and R-N zoning. Student housing ("...dormitory or similar use") must be built in R-F zones (bylaw 3.326).

The Retreat violates the Master Plan.

What about light pollution, and the effects on our community and the surrounding nature?

We all recall the party at Puffer's Pond in 2012, where the surrounding area was trashed and then cleaned up by local residents. What if that happens again, but this time around Atkins Reservoir, the town's water supply?

We all know what the Retreat will become: a run-down student ghetto, unsupervised by the University, and possibly overlooked by law enforcement. Landmark is proposing 'private streets'- that would mean open container laws become unenforceable. The Retreat would be the only place where open drinking on the street is acceptable in Amherst. This is a major health and public safety concern where drinking and driving is already a major issue and worry.

For all of these reasons, and *many* more- the Retreat is not right for Amherst.

Ann Cooper-Ciccarelli
Andrew Ciccarelli

From: Matthew Roehrig [mailto:mgroehrig@comcast.net]
Sent: Sunday, December 01, 2013 3:01 PM
To: Brestrup, Christine
Subject: Comments: Proposed Landmark subdivision in Cushman

Comments to the Amherst Planning Board – 12/1/2013

I am expressing my strong opposition to Landmark's proposed subdivision for student housing in the Cushman forest. I would like the planning board to address the following concerns before any decisions are made on this proposal:

Amherst has restricted dedicated student housing to the R-F zone. Yet here we have a huge subdivision dedicated specifically to student housing being proposed for R-O and R-N zoned areas. I fail to see what loophole in zoning bylaws allows such a development to go forward.

The R-O zone in particular is supposed to be low density. This proposal places a cluster development of 175 units housing 641 students (768 parking spaces) in the middle of a low density neighborhood and can't help but oppose that neighborhood's existing character and as such violate Amherst's master plan.

The designation of roadways within the development as "private" may impede the enforcement of open container laws, certainly a concern in any high-density student residential area.

Thank you for your consideration.

Matthew Roehrig
73 High Point Drive
Amherst, MA

From: Marybeth Bridegam [mailto:bmarybeth@comcast.net]
Sent: Saturday, November 30, 2013 5:58 PM
To: Brestrup, Christine
Subject: Comments on The Retreat #1

Planning Board
c/o Christine Brestrup, Senior Planner
Department of Conservation and Development
Town Hall, 4 Boltwood Avenue
Amherst, MA 01002

To the Planning Board:

The Landmark Retreat that is proposed for the wooded Cushman Area of North Amherst would be terminally destructive to the Town of Amherst, as a whole. I hope the Planning Board will consider the following points, before making your decision:

1. **Amherst zoning laws forbid student housing, in any form, in outlying, residential areas, such as Cushman, without succumbing to deceptive changes in terminology that seek to obscure the true intent of the buildings.** To change that law for the Landmark proposal would not only violate the existing law, but would violate the trust of many Amherst residents who invested a great deal of their time, money and effort creating their homes and developing their properties in the area under consideration for the Landmark project, because they trusted the Town of Amherst to adhere to the laws that existed, when they bought their property and built/did major renovations to their homes in this area. What was the intent of the Master Plan? To avoid sprawl? Well, this would be major sprawl in a most inappropriate part of the town - taking some of the only unspoiled woodland in the town.
2. One only has to drive on narrow, hilly, winding, rural Henry Street, Market Hill Road and Flat Hills Road - the three public roads that surround the projected site of The Retreat - to recognize that they are **already hazardous for normal residential traffic.** It is hardly imaginable that any town planner would expect that adding many hundreds of cars, driven by young, inexperienced drivers to these roads could possibly be advantageous to the Town of Amherst, to its traffic management, to its police force, to its road conditions, to its accident rate and to its winter driving problems, let alone the safety of its tax-paying citizens!
3. The plans for the Landmark project, released this past week, indicate that they plan to have three access roads into The Retreat. **This would maximize the amount of disruption for the daily lives and commutes of the maximum number of North Amherst residents.** This would make it impossible for any area of North Amherst to be free of student traffic and would maximize the amount of road surfaces that would have to be widened, improved and maintained for the added student traffic. To include an exit road from The Retreat on Flat Hills Road would add into the increased traffic from The Retreat, **two of the steepest, most dangerous hills in the Town of Amherst.** Anyone who has ever tried to navigate either the Flat Hills Road Hill or the Market Hill Road hill in icy conditions, which are frequent in winter months in Amherst, would realize that adding any traffic at all to those hills, especially in winter, would be extremely hazardous, to say the least! I have personally, while driving very slowly, in low gear, had my car turn sideways and slide down all of the Flat Hills Road hill on an icy winter day! I was extremely lucky that no car was trying to go up the hill, while my car was slithering down, sideways, and completely out of control!
4. While short-sighted Amherst residents are looking forward to increased taxes from The Retreat, they also should **calculate the loss of taxes that will be caused by the drop in value of the land and homes**

in the area surrounding the Landmark project. The current property owners/tax-payers in North Amherst are willing to pay their very high taxes because their professional and personal lives are enhanced by the peace and quiet of the rural, wooded atmosphere in which they currently live and work. If and when The Retreat residents increase the traffic congestion, driving hazards, noise and partying in that whole area - and decrease the hiking trails and bird calls - many of the current property owners will leave the area, losing money when they sell their homes. And, the town will find that those homes will have lost a great deal of value when they are re-sold, consequently dropping the tax value to the town.

5. Although some short-sighted Amherst residents believe that the Landmark project will bring more tax money to the Town of Amherst, the wiser long-range planners realize that **the Landmark Retreat will cost the town far more than those tax receipts, in police and fire protection, ambulances, Public Works equipment, vehicles and staff for the increased building and maintenance of the many rural roads surrounding the Landmark project as well as the residential streets between the Landmark Retreat and the university campus.** Any serious calculation will confirm this. Where will the Amherst Public Works Department find the staff and money to rebuild, widen and maintain these roads, when they haven't been able to rebuild the roads of the High Point residential area of North Amherst for the past 40 years?

6. Students enrolled at the University of Massachusetts-Amherst live in this town in order to attend the University of Massachusetts-Amherst, and **the university that accepts their tuition should be responsible for housing the students they enroll.** The university owns a great deal of open, available property and should build student housing on university land. This need should be met by the university and by the legislature of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, NOT by the Town of Amherst and its residents. **If the university does not want to provide housing for the students they admit, then perhaps they should admit fewer students!** The state legislature and university system need to recognize and accept the realities of daily life in the small, rural village of Amherst. Perhaps the **Town of Amherst should demand respect for its town and the lives of its citizens,** if the university and the state government do not give it to us willingly!

7. Students who come here to study should be housed on or next to the university campus, so that their professors, libraries, laboratories and other means to their education are located as close to their residences as possible. **Students should not be criss-crossing large residential areas of the town in order to move between the source of their studies and their residences - for the general welfare of both the students and the townspeople, as well as considering the amount of carbon released into the environment in which we all must live.**

8. **The Landmark company and the University of Massachusetts system are both "playing" the residents of Amherst as fools,** if they persuade the Town of Amherst to accept the responsibility of housing university students in the town instead of where they belong - on university property. Why should both the Landmark company and the University of Massachusetts system reap financial gain while causing increased costs for Amherst tax-payers. **Amherst residents will be double-taxed** - once every April 15, when they send their taxes to Boston, and again, all during the year, when they lose money to lower real estate valuations and pay increased town taxes here in Amherst, in order to support student housing-related expenses that should be the responsibility of the University of Massachusetts and the State.

9. Landmark Retreats can be found all over southern cities, and a few in the Southwest, but they've been trying to get a foothold in the small college towns of New England. Other small New England college towns have resisted them. **Will the Town of Amherst fall into their trap?**

10. And, if the Town of Amherst REALLY thinks it should be responsible for housing university

students, they should separate this issue from the really terrible choice of one of the only unspoiled woodland locations in our town, and the Jones Realty Company's desire to sell that particular piece of land. Just because Cinda Jones wants to sell that piece of land is no reason for the Town of Amherst to approve the proposed use of that land. **These should be two separate issues.**

11. More and more national news articles have emphasized the shrinking number of children in the United States, which translates to fewer and fewer university students expected in coming years. This, in turn, translates to **a shrinking market for the Landmark Retreat, and a shrinking amount of tax return**, after the town has been persuaded to invest in wider, straighter roads; increased fire and police protection; increased equipment purchases, etc.

12. Any analysis of the American economy is bound to find far too many unemployed or under-employed parents, who cannot afford to send their bright, capable children to college. Will there really be 641 University of Massachusetts students whose **parents will be willing and able to pay the extra cost of their children living in the deluxe, gated Landmark Retreat?** And will those 641 sets of parents want to pay extra money to have their children **living that far from the university, in an atmosphere that will encourage extra partying and less studying?** Will the Town of Amherst be "stuck" with a dead albatross hanging around our municipal neck?

13. If The Retreat fails as student housing, it will certainly be rented or sold to young families that **will surely be sending many children to the Amherst School System.** Is the Town of Amherst willing to face that very likely possibility?

14. Building complexes of "mini-dorms" in university towns are a growing investment trend across the nation. Why should Amherst be victimized by an out-of-town, for-profit company that wants to come here to make a lot of money from large-scale renting to UMass students? Although Landmark Properties wants to build the "Retreat" in the heavily wooded Cushman section of Amherst and has promised to maintain and manage the "mini-dorms" they build there, they built mini-dorm projects in Raleigh, N.C., in Tallahassee, Fla., and numerous other towns and cities, then sold them, within a year, to Inland American Real Estate Trust — for millions of dollars of profit. **Landmark is expanding the building - and re-sale to investors - of mini-dorm projects in university towns across the country, due to their high degree of profitability from rents - not for good management practices!** What will happen to all the good management promises from Landmark, after they sell The Retreat to a large real estate investment firm that just wants to collect rents, from a distance?

15. BTW, there should be considerable concern about the mini-dorms being built so close to high-tension power lines. There is considerable research that shows they can cause leukemia and other cancers. There have been difficulties selling house lots in that area, because of the **danger to people living near high tension lines.** This does not seem to be a very good location to build residences for anyone! Parents of students might not want their children to live in such a location, and it might affect Landmark's ability to rent the spaces, if they build there!

16.. As a recent letter writer pointed out, **commuters and other travelers in the Amherst area will soon learn to by-pass the Town of Amherst**, in order to avoid the traffic congestion that will be caused by so many students going back and forth between The Retreat in North Amherst and the university campus. This will basically dominate at least half of the town - full-time! Will this be good for the Amherst downtown, that has been working so hard, for so long to rejuvenate itself? Think of all the investment the town has made in the BID and the Chamber of Commerce, to try to bring people and business to Amherst's downtown area.

17. **Landmark has an unpleasant habit of building more such student developments**, once they get

their foot in the door. Where will they build next in Amherst - on Belchertown Road, next to Amherst Woods or in the meadows of South Amherst? [See this website as well as the references in Ann Hollingsworth's letter to the *Amherst Bulletin* on November 22, 2013:

Second 'Retreat' student housing proposal faces criticism | Student ...

studenthousingplanet.com/.../second-'retreat'-student-housing-proposal-f.

Do we want our town to be one big dormitory, with students racing back and forth through our town neighborhoods, between and among their "mini-dorms" and those of their friends in other parts of town? If "mini-dorms" are scattered around the different areas of our town, **how long will we still have hiking trails, quiet walks for birders and the profusion of wildlife that is now a vital part of our environment?**

18. **ALL of the other Landmark student housing has been built in cities and/or far larger towns than Amherst.** The larger and more diverse the host municipality is, the more flexible it can be, to accommodate such a large and concentrated mass of student housing. The little rural village of Amherst, Massachusetts does not even remotely fit any aspects of the characteristics of the other Landmark projects. It is simply and totally inappropriate for the Town of Amherst to be consumed by this huge, concentration of student housing, too far from the university that attracted the students here in the first place and too intrusive to a rural village that has all it can do now to keep its head above water.

19. **The Town of Amherst government should be protecting the interests of the residents/tax-payers of the town,** and not acquiescing to pressure from outside developers and a real estate company that wants to cash in on some long-held property. The Planning Board should be asking, as their top priority, if this proposed sale of the Cushman property to a big-time, national developer is really, first and foremost, good for the Town of Amherst and its citizens. Will it make Amherst a more or less desirable place to live? The answer is obviously NO, IT WILL MAKE AMHERST A MUCH LESS DESIRABLE PLACE TO LIVE, and THE TOWN WILL SUFFER, IN THE LONG RUN AND IN MANY WAYS, IF THIS PROJECT IS APPROVED!

20. What happened to **the Master Plan for Amherst that is supposed to create an environmentally sustainable town?** Approving urban sprawl in outlying, rural, wooded areas which will add considerably to Amherst's carbon footprint hardly seems like good planning! **Planning Board - do your job!**

Respectfully,

Marybeth Bridegam
Resident of the High Point area
of North Amherst

P.S. - DO take a look at some of the many **websites that indicate how towns are fighting to keep Landmark Retreats out of their area, and how unhappy many communities are, once they're built.**

Mini Dorms/Public Nuisance Rental Properties ... - San Diego <https://www.sandiego.gov/development-services/>

As UA tuition increases, will mini-dorms become empty monuments ...



tucson-progressive.com/.../as-ua-tuition-increases-will-mini-dor..

Even in their hometown of Athens, GA, people don't want more of them:

[Beat The Retreat](#)

www.beattheretreat.com/

[Tag: mini-dorms - Tucson Progressive - Tucson Citizen](#)

tucsoncitizen.com/tucson-progressive/tag/mini-dorms/

[Arizona Daily Wildcat :: Sam Hughes debates mini-dorms](#)

www.wildcat.arizona.edu/index.php/.../sam_hughes_debates_minidorms

1. **[Why We Oppose the Retreat! - No Blacksburg Retreat](#)**

noblacksburgretreat.com/WhyOppose.html

The Preliminary Plan submitted by the "Retreat" makes several references to the view to the north of the property and specifically mentions the view as a factor in the request for modifications to more intensely develop the southern portion of the property.

Specifically, Section VII (h) Measures Taken to Preserve Significant Views reads:

"There are no identified significant view sheds except north of the property along Market Hill Rd."

"The open space dedication on the northern side of the property will protect medium value scenic views."

"Although there appears to be no specific valuable scenic views identified on the property there are two view areas north of the property along Market Hill Rd. The development will dedicate open space on the north and west side of the property."

"Three of the five planning strategies identified in the Amherst Comprehensive Planning Study dated May 2004 are incorporated in the preliminary plan for the Retreat. They are: Views Protection...."

As an owner of the view being referenced above, I would like to clarify that the view being cited is neither owned by the developer or the town nor is it contiguous to the property or even visible from the property. Most importantly, it is inappropriate for a developer to request modifications for a development proposal that depends on another property owner NOT developing their property.

In fact, the view referenced in the Preliminary Plan (located at the corner of Market Hill and Flat Hills Rd) is threatened by the Retreat proposal because it undermines the essential character of Flat Hills Rd and the surrounding neighborhoods. If Cushman is going to be developed as proposed by the Preliminary Plan submitted by the Retreat, there will be little incentive to retain the view to the north.

George H. Lohrer
George H. Lohrer

From: Judith Frank [mailto:jeffrank@amherst.edu]
Sent: Saturday, November 30, 2013 11:47 AM
To: Brestrup, Christine
Subject: The Retreat

Dear Ms. Brestrup,

Thank you for soliciting community reactions to The Retreat. I am dismayed by it -- by the sure destruction of the Cushman neighborhood and by the environmental depredation it will cause.

And I am devastated that even our small town does not have a way of resisting Big Money. I have become used to feeling I have little voice on a national scale, where corporations have bought up the electoral process. But I was able, till now, to labor under the illusion that Amherst's values were different, and that people did have a voice here. Watching a very organized community organization repeatedly fail to combat the forces of wealthy developers has been disheartening indeed.

Sincerely,
Judith Frank
27 Pokeberry Ridge
Amherst, MA 01002

Judith Frank
Professor of English and Elizabeth W. Bruss Reader
English Department Director of Studies
Amherst College
Amherst, MA 01002

From: Susan Alward [mailto:spalward@gmail.com]
Sent: Saturday, November 30, 2013 12:41 PM
To: Brestrup, Christine
Subject: Landmark proposal

428 Henry Street
Amherst, MA 01002
November 30, 2013

Dear Ms. Brestrup:

As a resident of Henry Street since 1995, I would like to offer two observations about current traffic conditions:

- 1) A great majority of drivers do not obey the stop signs on Flat Hills and Shutesbury Roads at North East and Henry Streets. (I walk my dog through that intersection four times each day, minimizing time on Henry Street as much as possible for safety sake.)
- 2) Since the re-surfacing of Henry Street, the relatively straight portion on which my house is located frequently serves as a speedway.

In my opinion, the proposed site of the Landmark development is extremely inappropriate for many reasons. Traffic safety is only one.

Sincerely,
Susan P. Alward

Dear Christine Brestrup,

We write to express our deep concern about the effects of the proposed "Retreat" in Cushman. Although this proposed development has many negative aspects, we want to address the effect on traffic in the area.

The present proposal would bring a minimum of 700 private vehicles to this outlying area of Amherst. The greatly increased traffic would issue from Market Hill Road onto Bridge Street and from the "Retreat" itself onto Henry Street. There are two intersections now near the Cushman Common: one goes past the Cushman Market and onto Bridge Street (the extension of Pine Street); the more northerly one goes directly onto Bridge Street. These are already busy intersections; and particularly the one on the south end of the Cushman Common is somewhat difficult to negotiate, especially in the winter when snow is piled high: it is very hard to see traffic coming from the north. There is also a pedestrian crossing at the southwest end of the Cushman Common: it is already dangerous, given the volume of traffic and the speed at which cars regularly travel to and from Leverett.

If this is the situation now—that the existing roads and intersections are just barely adequate (some would say less than adequate) to handle the present volume of traffic—the addition of perhaps 1,000 additional vehicles would produce a catastrophic traffic jam, on a daily basis. Since this is proposed as student housing, vehicles from "the Retreat" would mostly be heading toward the University of Massachusetts, traveling over roads that are already busy and in very poor condition. They would travel over Pine Street (full of potholes for much of the year and in poor condition for many years now) or down East Pleasant Street—also, increasingly, in poor repair. Or, if exiting the "Retreat" from the south end, they would travel down Henry Street and onto Strong Street. Henry Street is narrow and winding and has some blind driveways; it too needs repair to its surface, especially as it approaches Strong Street. All of these access routes necessitate crossing the railroad tracks to reach UMass, which means that cars could be backed up for some distance, creating a dangerous situation as trains go through.

There is some bus service in Cushman now, for which residents of the area are grateful: six buses a day from the Cushman Center to UMass, two in the morning (7:30 and 8:30), one at noon (12:40), and three in the afternoon (3:30, 4:50, and 6:10). This number of buses, running on this schedule, is obviously insufficient for a large number of students heading to classes at UMass.

It seems altogether evident that the development proposed for the other side of Henry Street is an inappropriate location for a large number of students, since it is relatively far from the University, and accessible only over roads with significant obstacles: oddly configured intersections, railroad crossings, and poorly maintained roads and streets.

We strongly urge you to take these factors into consideration in reaching a decision about the appropriateness of such a development for this area of Amherst. It seems altogether obvious that it is not.

Sincerely yours,
Harry and Sharon Seelig
74 Morgan Circle, Amherst

November 30, 2013

To the Amherst Planning Board

Comments about the proposed large-scale student housing development in Cushman Village

I bought a home in the High Point Hill neighborhood of Amherst thirty years ago. I was attracted to this peaceful, wooded area of Amherst, and to the neighborhood environment around Cushman Village. I'm a professor at Mount Holyoke College and had been living on the edge of Mount Holyoke's campus in college-subsidized housing. It had been wonderfully convenient to my job, but living near a large population of undergraduates (even lovely, relatively-quiet Mt. Holyoke students) was not a suitable environment for raising a family (when there were dances the bass music of the band made my house tremble), and I decided to move to the northern part of Amherst, even though the trade-off was that I have to spend an hour each work day commuting.

Cushman Village is one of Amherst's great treasures. It serves not only the larger neighborhood, but the entire town as well. Bicyclists, runners, and hikers use the Village common as a meeting place, parents bring their children to play on the green and climb on the rock ("serpent") wall and hold their little ones up to wave to the train when it passes through, families come to the May Day Celebration, and Amherst residents stop by for coffee and lunch and music at the Cushman Cafe. For many years an informal group of writers (we call ourselves the Cushman Clan) has been gathering Fridays in the Cushman Cafe—outdoors, when the weather permits. Cushman has been the home to our discussions, and a number of books have been born here. Writers and artists have dropped by, brought friends, and kids, and (when we're outside) dogs. There's no other place like Cushman, and it has nurtured us.

Any large-scale development in the Cushman area would change the character of the neighborhood irrevocably. The roads in the neighborhood were not designed for a high volume of traffic. They can barely sustain the quantity of cars that currently use them. They are curving, narrow, and rugged. The intersections have poor visibility. There are two railroad crossing, both close to houses. The one closer to the Cushman General Store is particularly potentially hazardous. Market Hill Road, Henry Street, and Flat Hills Road, which surround the property in question, are streets where people now walk, where runners run, where parents push strollers. Increased traffic would make that impossible.

A huge student-housing development would entirely destroy the Cushman neighborhood, and have a huge impact on all the surrounding neighborhoods as well. It makes no sense for the town of Amherst to allow a large-scale student housing project to be built where it is not

within walking distance from the University campus or situated on a main road (like Route 116) that can handle the enormous volume of traffic (cars as well as buses.)

My main concern about this proposed development has to do with the concept of unsupervised undergraduate housing--no matter where it is located. Students who live in university-owned dormitories are required to abide by regulations, and the university has disciplinary power over them. No one has control over students who live off campus, and in the end it is the Town of Amherst police who are faced with dealing with the endless problems that occur regularly. Undergraduates are, for a large part, still teenagers, and they will invariably behave like teenagers, with inevitable consequences. A vast complex of undergraduates, not under the jurisdiction of the university, will be a nightmare, not only for the residents of the neighborhood, but for the town as well.

A house on High Point Drive was rented one year to a group of undergraduates. Our experience was similar to that of people who live on streets close to UMass. The students didn't handle their garbage or recycling, they played loud music, and they drove too fast. A party they gave quickly became out of hand (texting and Facebook invites makes open parties accessible to everyone.) Cars parked everywhere and blocked the roads. The noise woke everyone in the whole surrounding area. Inebriated students urinated and defecated on people's lawns. For days we picked up beer cans that had been strewn over the neighborhood. The house was never rented again. That was four undergraduates. Imagine a hundred! Imagine more than six hundred!

The only people to benefit from this proposed development are the developers themselves, and Cowls, who will profit grandly from the sale of the land. The citizens of Amherst will all be the losers. Cushman Village is an irreplaceable town resource. The area surrounding it is a thriving and diverse residential neighborhood. Amherst needs to protect neighborhoods—they are what make us.

Corinne Demas
cdemas@mtholyoke.edu

From: deborah rubin [mailto:deborahrubin8@gmail.com]

Sent: Friday, November 29, 2013 4:12 PM

To: Brestrup, Christine

Subject: Retreat

Concerns:

Flat hills Rd. and Henry St. are Scenic Roads. How will Retreat effectively put in drive entrances on these roads that will fit in the Scenic Roads guidelines?

What are building regulations concerning small streams, vernal ponds, and seasonal flooded areas (of which there are several)?

What about building where there is rock outcropping? Will builders have to blast? How will that affect those residents on well and septic? Will that change water table?

I could go on. And on. And on. But will stop.

Deborah Rubin

www.deborahrubin.com

413-253-7922

Thomas C. Perron
222 Flat Hills Rd
Amherst, MA 01002
413-256-8011

November 29, 2013

Dear Ms. Brestrup and the Amherst Planning Board:

I am a 5th generation Amherst resident living in the house and on land that has been in my family for that time. My parents and I own 56 acres of land on Flat Hills Rd and have always taken great pride in maintaining our property to reflect the rural landscape of Amherst. Our land has always been open to our neighbors to also enjoy, walking their dogs, hiking and winter activities. It has always been a peaceful part of town. I state these facts to show that I and my family are not newcomers to Amherst. We work here, we live our lives out here, we hope to be good neighbors and steward to the land we enjoy.

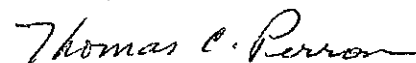
Growing up in Cushman, I have seen many changes: High Point Drive developed; Sacco's Farm developed; and Shutesbury Road developed. These have all been done in good taste, maintaining the character of neighborhoods, while bringing growth and needed revenue to Amherst. I have always felt that the W.D. Cows property would be the next Amherst Woods type of development when the housing market was right. I believe that The Retreat development plan does not fit both the master plan and the subdivision regulations which say a development should maintain the character of the neighborhood.

Have the members of the planning board walk this property? If you have, good! If not, I invite you to do so. I am a property abutter and know this land well; I will personally guide you on this site. The terrain is steep and not beneficial to this type of cluster development. This land is zoned RO and should be kept for a residential family oriented neighborhood and not rezoned to accommodate large scale student housing.

If the zoning change is granted, I strongly feel the town will regret this forever. There is no going back. Very careful thought must be given by the planning board to make the right decision in this most important matter. Please keep the best interest of Amherst at heart – NO RETREAT!

I don't consider myself a NIMBY. I support landowners' rights to do as they wish within their legal rights; however, I must take a stand on the Retreat and voice my opinion that this is not good for our community. You, the members of our planning board, are our appointed officials, stand tall, and don't bend to the pressure and threats of big business. Make the right decision and don't let the citizens of Amherst down.

Sincerely,



Thomas C. Perron

To: Amherst Planning Board

From: Peter Seterdahl, 561 Flat Hills Rd., Amherst

Regarding: Preliminary Proposal from the The Retreat of Amherst

Date: November 24, 2013

I am writing to express my profound opposition to the proposal by Landmark Properties for the Retreat at Amherst, to develop 146 acres in North Amherst. I acknowledge the need for more student housing, but this proposal is not only in defiance of the written law, it defies common sense.

First, current zoning laws prohibit "Fraternity or sorority building, social dormitory or similar use related to Amherst College, Hampshire College or the University of Massachusetts." If that isn't enough, in section 3.326 of the zoning bylaws, it states the intention to locate large concentrations of students in "areas close to heavily traveled streets, areas close to business, commercial, and educational districts, areas already developed for multi-family use". Cushman does certainly not meet these criteria.

Secondly, section 4.313 of the zoning bylaw states that one of the benefits of a cluster subdivision is its "compatibility with the character of the surrounding residential areas." The Retreat is completely incompatible with the rural nature of Cushman, primarily as it relates to density. Plans for the Retreat envision 3 story duplexes, this degree of density is in no way compatible with the character of the surround residential area.

This proposal is unique in many unsavory, possibly illegal, and certainly wrong-headed ways; it is the first large scale student housing complex to be located in an R-O district; it is the largest residential development in many years and perhaps the largest cluster development in Amherst's history. If there is to be any rhyme and rhythm to the town of Amherst, as there has been up till now (sort of), town and university must work together to envision a master plan for the coexistence of the two entities. The infrastructure of this town is in no way equipped to take on the kind of growth the university envisions, and The Retreat is the kind of wart that we will have to show for our unwitting ways.

Of course I would advocate scrapping the Retreat and building apartment/dormitory style buildings within walking distance of campus, thereby obviating the need for yet more cars and putting the students closer to each other and their classmates. But let's leave that to a professional town planner who has a 100 year plan in mind. Barring

cessation of the Retreat development, I would strongly urge the planning board to examine the development proposal very carefully and to insist that the Retreat adheres to the law, its spirit and letter.

Respectfully submitted,

Peter Seterdahl
561 Flat Hills Rd.
Amherst, MA 01002
413 222 1519

December 3, 2013

Dear Christine and members of the Planning Board,

In 2011, I sold my condominium in Sutton Court, Echo Hill to live with my sister while we designed and built a house on Flat Hills Road. We designed it to compliment homey simplicity of New England vernacular architecture, fitting in with some of the older residences on Flat Hills. We moved in on March 29, 2013. We invested every penny we had to build our house, every penny we could free up. It was built with each of our retirements in mind, to accommodate our creative lives and a love of simply being at home. Less than a month later, we received notice of The Retreat.

I feel that we might as well have just handed \$100,000 over to Landmark, built a different house, saying "Here, you take it, it's the eventual depreciation on our new house." Some days, it's nearly unbearable. Our sweet neighbor who is now gone, Norm Ford, expressed outrage and dismay long before my sister and I did.

On other days, an unutterable feeling of loss follows quickly on the heels of my imaginings, true or not. Not just a visual loss out of our windows, a loss of deer, bears, tanagers, and heron, of black birch, shag bark hickory, and rare huge oak trees. These living delights belong here and have made room for all of us to live next door to them--this aesthetic vitality is appreciated and enjoyed by everyone.

It's the loss, rather, of my own long-anticipated peace of mind, a settled heart which feels strangely betrayed, as it must to many of us on these small roads. It's as if someone you've loved for a long time suddenly seeks divorce. The future is wiped of everything you thought it would be. How could this, our home, a tangible expression of years of hard work, savings, effort, time, and money, so graciously unfold before us to reveal Pandora's box?! And as much as I love our students, their vibrancy, youth, naiveté and guts, I have sought to put distance between their potential and crushing bothersomeness and my home, where I wish to seek refuge.

If The Retreat is constructed, I'll adjust. I know all about good earplugs. I know exactly what to expect. I'm not interested in creating opposition, but rather in seeking solutions, if there are any. This is straight from my heart to you, to the Planning Board, and to the Select Board. My sentiments about this are no more important than my neighbors' are. I feel as deeply about this for them, whose families might have raised generations of Amherst families or who are now in midst of planning their family's future. I can no longer categorically dismiss the way all of us feel as an avoidance of what we must do quickly, as a town and a community--find adequate, affordable, comfortable, and safe housing for all of our residents, not just segmented demographics. If the balance of upper income homes and student housing shifts now and then, understand that the fulcrum is the middle, resident population, those of us who work, live, and stay in Amherst because we appreciate the contributions of our neighbors as well as changes with time.

I have many questions about Landmark Properties LLC. As I did in depth research about them, more questions arose and I either have no answers to them or found answers I don't like. Rather than speculate from a point of my own corporate or legal ignorance, I'm presenting you

with my questions, because it's best to know and understand the people one does business with.

1. *Why, on the Buy-Sell agreement, did Landmark change their name to Markland?*
2. *Who is Landmark Properties LLC? How are they connected to other "Landmark" properties, real estate brokers, sellers, developers? (You can read about their Dubai offices [here](#).)*
3. *How soon will Landmark offload The Retreat at Amherst after completion? Please see [this article](#).*
4. *"The Retreat" is a community name bestowed by Landmark, primarily for students. Why do they avoid using the term "students" or "student housing" in their literature? Don't our bylaws discourage demographic selection for development?*
5. *What if college enrollment drops, as it has been since the economy has slowly recovered?*
6. *I'm very concerned about the effects of blasting on local wells, well water contamination due to the toxicity of blasting materials, and the effects of blasting on older homes along Flat Hills. Some of our wells are very old, some shallow. It takes only a little vibration to reduce the flow of water or close it off entirely. To that end, I request a study of the water flow gals/min of such residences on Flat Hills Road, including our own. Landmark's massive proposed deconstruction of the environment is offensive and insulting to those of us who love it just the way it is.*
7. *Landmark needs us only to get a foothold on campus housing in the North. That's why they want it so badly. We don't need Landmark to do our work.*

Thank you kindly for reading this long and personal note. My personal story is only one voice among many who object to this behemoth of a project. Landmark is the Wal-Mart of student housing. No, I don't want them in my neighborhood; it's as simple as that.

All best regards,

Janet Poirrier
290 Flat Hills Road
Amherst, MA 01002
H: 256-1224
W: 542-5025
Cell: 413-629-8133

From: SHARON WEIZENBAUM [mailto:sweiz@rcn.com]
Sent: Wednesday, December 04, 2013 11:06 AM
To: Select Board
Cc: Brestrup, Christine
Subject: Response to meeting with the Select Board

To the Town of Amherst Select Board

We, the undersigned residents of Cushman Village and surrounding area, want to thank you all for listening to our many serious concerns regarding the preliminary plans for the proposed student housing development in the heart of our village. However, there were comments made by the Select Board at the meeting on Monday, December 2, 2013 that left many of us alarmed and concerned. There were two comments in particular that struck us as inappropriate that we feel we must address:

First we were struck with the comment made by the Select Board Chair, Stephanie O'Keeffe regarding her personal opinion that it would be a shame for traffic to empty onto the "beautiful Flat Hills Road." She offered that Henry Street and Market Hill Road are more appropriate streets for the 700 plus cars a day to go up and down, implying that Flat Hills Road somehow had more value as a street and neighborhood to be protected than Henry Street or Market Hill Road. As residents of Cushman who live on Flat Hills Road, Market Hill Road, Henry Street and the surrounding streets, we feel that this comment was inappropriate. It is inappropriate because all of the neighborhoods in question are valuable in their own way and none of us feel that any one is more suited to the destructive impact of this development than another. None of the roads in question are complete roads - all of them are narrow, without bike paths or sidewalks. The historic beauty of and density of family homes on Henry Street and Market Hill Road make them particularly inappropriate for this traffic much as the beauty and steep grade on Flat Hills road make it also inappropriate for the emptying out of cars from the proposed development. In particular, it does not seem to be the role of the Chair of the Select Board, nor the venue to voice this personal opinion. Given the reason for the meeting, we want to make sure this is not in any way part of the Select Board's recommendation to the Planning Board.

Secondly Aaron Hayden's comment regarding some of the Town zoning laws alarmed us. Mr. Hayden said that some of the zoning laws are outdated because they were passed when more houses had their own septic systems than now. He was encouraging the Select Board to recommend to the planning board to *take zoning law less seriously* because of this. You might understand why this was alarming to those of us who took the zoning laws seriously when we purchased or built our homes here, feeling that there are laws there to protect us. To hear that a Select Board member does not feel these laws are valid is indeed upsetting.

Finally, we heard a general sense in the meeting that the Select Board felt we should say "Yes" to modifications unless we have a good reason not to. We want to point out that we must assume that our zoning laws will stay intact unless the developer *can show us* clearly that their requests for modifications are not only necessary but also safe and in the interest of the town. In other words, it is not our responsibility to show why not. Our zoning laws themselves say why not (greater than 8% grade is unsafe, decreased lot size is inconsistent with the character of an RO district etc.) It is the responsibility of the developer to show us why we *should* give up our sensible and protective laws.

We appreciate the difficult position the Select Board is in regarding the debate over this development but we feel it is important for us to remind the Board when it seems that statements are made that do not

reflect the reality of the situation. We invite you to 1. publicly clarify that you do not think that one street is more disposable than another, 2. assure us that you agree that our town zoning is respected by the Select Board as a means to protect our neighborhoods. and 3. let us know that you agree, and will communicate this agreement to the planning board, that the zoning laws should stay intact unless the developer proves to us that the modifications are completely necessary, safe, in keeping with the character of the neighborhood and in the interest of the whole town.

Thank you,

Sharon Weizenbaum, 86 Henry Street

Karen Merrill, 150 Market Hill Road

Sean & Rita Burke 50 Henry Street

Van Kaynor, 474 Market Hill Road

Christine and Alton Acker, 53 Henry Street

Eva Lohrer, 492 Flat Hills Road

Deborah Thornton, 92 Henry Street

Chris and Ellen Pile, 110 Bridge Street

Jack and Amy Hirsch, 400 Flat Hills Road

Susan and Michael Howard, 528 Pine Street

Ira Bryck, 255 Strong Street

Ann and Keith Hollingsworth, 83 Henry Street

Betsy and Philip Matthews, 107 Henry Street

Fanny Rothschild, 26 Morgan Circle

Edie MacMullen, 344 Flat Hills Road

From: John Rowan-Stern [rowan1959@gmail.com]
Sent: Monday, November 18, 2013 4:14 PM
To: Brestrup, Christine
Cc: Planning Department Email
Subject: Retreat

To whom it may concern,

I currently reside at 692 Pratt Corner Rd, in Shutesbury just over the Amherst town line. I am less than a mile from the proposed Retreat site. I am very concerned about the building of the "Retreat" on Henry street for a number of reasons. Here are just a few.

1.) I live in a quiet neighborhood. When the weather is fair, my wife and I like to sit out at night. Sound from town travels easily to where we live, we can listen to the Umass Marching band practice in the evening. If students were allowed to party, the noise would be invasive to our home and our privacy.

I won't mix thoughts here. If there couldn't be a quiet hours rule for this compound, I would object to its construction, period. Anything short of that rule would simply lead to the police being called every time there was a complaint, and there would be numerous.

2.) I travel over Amherst roads several times a day. Over the years, there has been an increase in the number of drivers who speed, or break other laws while driving. The increase in traffic due to the building of this retreat would only increase the risk of accidents and personal injury. If you don't think there is already a problem, just stand on the side of the road on the "S" turns where Northeast Street meets Henry street. I'll give you a nickel for every person that abides by the speed limit. In three hours, you won't have enough money to buy a small black coffee. In addition, the town appears to have a hard time keeping up with the maintenance of roads, in particular the upkeep of the asphalt. Henry street already sees quite a bit of traffic. Having the retreat would put an increased burden on the highway infrastructure.

3.) My final comment is that I am concerned for the atmosphere of Cushman village as a whole. If this retreat is built and the town planners and engineers determine that roads will need to be widened and changed. The utmost care should be taken in the design as it relates to the impact of this village.

Thank you for taking the time to read this.

John Rowan-Stern
rowan1959@gmail.com

From: bearacker@gmail.com [mailto:bearacker@gmail.com] **On Behalf Of** Alton Acker

Sent: Wednesday, November 20, 2013 10:00 AM

To: Brestrup, Christine

Subject: The Retreat

To the Amherst Planning Board:

In regard to the permit process, and general overview of the proposed Retreat planning, I'd like to mention that this concept is going to affect how those with a desire to build similar apartments in Amherst will be able to progress. Not only is the Retreat a bad idea for housing students so far away from campus, and an impact on general living in Cushman, those developers and general contractors who would desire building any size apartments in Amherst will have the ability to do so. In Amherst there is a bylaw, of which you are aware, that does not permit construction of "dormitory" type buildings, except on a campus. The property in question is zoned Residential/Outlying. Up to now private builders have not been able to build dormitory type apartments in Amherst. If Landmark Properties is able to build cluster apartments, designated for students only, then this is a precedent setting event that will mean that thereafter anyone will be able to build for students only. This will be more than granting a single permit to build general apartments.

So, as damaging as it will be if Landmark is allowed to build the Retreat, the far-reaching effects of granting the permit will change the climate of Amherst forever.

Alton "Bear" Acker
Cushman, MA

Ira Bryck
255 Strong Street
Amherst, MA 01002
ira@irabryck.com
413-545-4545

November 20, 2013

To the Amherst Planning Board
Amherst, MA
Submitted via email to Christine Brestrup
brestrupc@amherstma.gov

Dear Members of the Amherst Planning Board, and Town Planning Department,

Now that you are at the stage of considering the preliminary plan submitted for the Retreat brand student development in the R-O zone of Cushman forest, I implore you to be strict in your responsibilities in "promoting the health, safety, convenience and general welfare of the inhabitants of the Town of Amherst, and encouraging the most appropriate use of land throughout Amherst." That quote, as you must know, is the description of the purpose of the town's zoning bylaws.

The Landmark company, from Georgia, is hoping that the Amherst Planning Board will allow several dimensional modifications, so they can build the largest subdivision Amherst has seen since Amherst Woods. The reductions to lot sizes, frontages, and setbacks, and increases of road lengths ending in cul de sacs, provide for much higher density housing than clustering was intended to permit. This increase is needed so they can squeeze in housing for almost 700 students and over 700 cars in a forest strewn with wetlands, streams and rivers, unbuildable contours and bedrock, not to mention abutted by salamanders, fragile roads and a National Historic District.

As the Planning Board, I realize you have certain rights and authority, but not others. You cannot reject this project as inconsistent with the town's desires, as was recently done in Tuscaloosa, Alabama (named Most Liveable City in America by the US Conference of Mayors) and Blacksburg, Virginia (named by BusinessWeek as Best Place in the U.S. to Raise Kids, and by Southern Living magazine as Best College Town in the South). You cannot deny this project outright, even though in the last round of hearings your conclusive comments were that this is a bad project in a bad location.

But you do have the right to hold your ground, and be a board that is proactive in its thought and action. You do have the right to not give more than the law prescribes. You do have the right to hold them to the subdivision regulations, also emphasized by the Master Plan, that the development maintains the character of the neighborhood. You do have the right to insist that this be an "honest" project, by ensuring that Landmark needs to work within limits that the Planning Board thinks are wise, NOT by surrendering to Landmark the modifications that makes their sub-par plan suddenly viable. For the Planning Board to yield on these modifications is to allow the project to be built at the expense of Amherst's residents, reputation, and future.

I respect the complexity of what you must decide, in reaching the decisions that are fair to all concerned. You must be concerned with the rights of property owners and private business; and the intricate matter of supply and demand of affordable housing and student housing. I wish you insight and strength in applying your authority to protect real property values of your neighbors in Cushman, but also town-wide. This is not a NIMBY issue, unless you consider that our burgeoning small town is one big back yard, both yours and mine.

Sincerely

Ira Bryck

From: barb4ed@gmail.com [mailto:barb4ed@gmail.com] **On Behalf Of** Barbara Ford
Sent: Friday, November 22, 2013 2:05 PM
To: Brestrup, Christine
Subject: Fwd: The Retreat

Planning Board:

The proposed subdivision abuts my property on two sides. I have many concerns about the proposal but I will only address a few.

The layout of the road should be looked at carefully for ability to carry the traffic in a sensible way. Also for access and egress by emergency vehicles. The roadways should be constructed to town standards in the event that the town may have to take them over.

The impact of the roadway on abutting properties without any setbacks or buffers: consider the impact of headlights and street lighting on homes that have hitherto had the darkness and denseness of tree cover that exists in an outlying area,(RO) Think changes to the character of the neighborhood. Downcast lighting will not be a complete answer to this.

Too many lots, many very nonconforming even by cluster standards. This is not in character of the neighborhood or with the purpose of RO zoning. The normal life style noise will surely spill over to the surrounding properties. How will the additional reductions of the dimensional regulations affect the surrounding neighborhood and what if this subdivision has to be repurposed for family housing?

Is there really adequate usable open space for the intended population? I am not sure how usable a vegetative buffer at the rear of lots is to meet this requirement. (4.311)

I am concerned that the unique features of the topography, such as steep slopes, will not be preserved in the process of carving out these lots and the roadways.

Infrastructure: please give consideration to the abutters who may in the future be compelled to connect. Perhaps with easements to access the sewer in the shortest distance possible. Will storm water runoff of added roofs and pavement be adequately addressed by the layout of the roadways and storm sewer collecting points?

Thank you for your consideration, not only of the applicant, but also for the abutting neighborhoods. We must depend on you to apply the protections of the zoning bylaw for all of the town's citizens.

Barbara Ford
300 Flat Hills Rd.

-----Original Message-----

From: Ellie [mailto:edavis44@earthlink.net]

Sent: Friday, November 22, 2013 3:09 PM

To: Brestrup, Christine

Subject: sharing concerns

Hello-

I understand that affordable student housing is a priority in our town, but I am concerned about the cost of the proposed project off of Henry St in South Amherst to that neighborhood. I use this road to bring my pre-school age daughter to school in the morning and find it an extremely narrow and somewhat harrowing route, especially when there people jogging, walking or biking along the road. I know of parents who use this route to bike their children to school but would be extremely concerned for them if there was an influx of student drivers along the route. I feel that this particular road makes it a poor location choice for a large housing center and hope that you can either consider alternate locations or place the entrance on the far side of the allotted land so that this particular street and intersection is not affected.

Thanks you for your attention to this matter.

Best,

Ellie Davis

Ellie Davis, Ph.D.

From: Office Manager [mailto:office@cushmanscott.org]
Sent: Friday, November 22, 2013 2:55 PM
To: Brestrup, Christine
Cc: nancy@cushmanscott.org
Subject: Proposed Landmark Properties complex in North Amherst

To Whom It May Concern,

I would like to express my opposition to this proposed project in the Cushman Village of North Amherst. I have looked at the plans and received information about this as far as it would affect the school I currently work at, Cushman Scott Children's Center. I feel that the amount of traffic, students, noise and refuse that this would bring to this section of town would be unbearable. We are in fear that the blasting would frighten our children and perhaps damage our building. We are afraid that cars would race past our school making it dangerous for families who are picking up and dropping off. We are afraid that having a student complex nearby would make families think about sending their children elsewhere. I feel that "student housing" should be kept within a closer distance to UMass so as not to infringe on the lifestyles of others around Amherst. I live in this area for many of the things that UMass offers our community, but undergraduate students in bunches are something that I try to avoid. We all know that many of them are courteous, upstanding citizens but many students do not understand what it's like to raise a family. I avoid Meadow Street on the weekends due to the rowdy behavior and crowds and the fact that I don't want my children to be witness to this behavior. I'm afraid that this type of behavior may overtake the Cushman area too. My in-laws have lived on Spaulding Street for almost 45 years and they are afraid at nights, locking their cars in their garage, peeking out at the least sound, because of the high volume of student housing on Main Street now. I don't want the residents of Cushman to feel this way. I don't want the families at our school to feel this way. I would strongly discourage moving this project forward and I would ask that much, much more research goes into this before making any decisions. Thank you.

Jessica Carlson-Belanger
Office Coordinator
Cushman Scott Children's Center
413.549.1167
office@cushmanscott.org

From: Rose Kontak [mailto:rkontak@gmail.com]
Sent: Friday, November 22, 2013 9:47 PM
To: Brestrup, Christine
Subject: Retreat

This cannot happen in Amherst. The companies involved are selling the city one thing while selling the idea of the "Retreat" to students as another. The City of Amherst hasn't even repaved the roads in our neighborhood since our subdivision was built, but we expect that there will be no problems or impact by such a large and intrusive build?

The number of student will have little to no impact on UMass's ability to house its students. Students will still rent in other neighborhoods, causing nuisance. This was supposedly one of the attractions of the Retreat to the planning board. Let's not fool ourselves into thinking that those landlords will not still rent to students. They may have to compete and lower their rents. Hurting our local landlords (and their income taxes)!

Instead we will have a concentrated area of drunkenness and disruption. UMass has plenty of undeveloped land to build new housing. The City of Amherst would be better off lobbying the campus to deal with its students than burden any neighborhood with such a monstrous project.

The Retreat only perpetuates the problems the city has with its student population. Look at all the city "projects" that have been demolished exactly because of the concentration of bad habits! Students are taught more respect and better watched over broken up into INDIVIDUAL neighborhood rentals. While still not ideal, it is the lesser of the two evils. For all involved.

All this said, I am not against Cowl's developing its land. I would just prefer that what is developed meet not just the needs of Cinda Jones a random company HQ'ed in Georgia. Amherst has limited elder care facilities, for example.

Our neighborhood is very quiet. Without well paved roads, city water or sewer, and many homes without children, we still pay our high property taxes for the luxury of living in our peaceful woods of Amherst. If this retreat were to open in the area, it would devastate our homes values. Students would be at risk with the trains running right nearby. And Amherst would not be creating any image of an elite school and UMass is trying to rebrand.

Everyone (except Cinda Jones, maybe) is best served if this project is stalled and others are brought to the table, more appropriate for the land and more needed by the City of Amherst.

Thanks,
Rose Kontak
11 Overlook Drive
Amherst

From: Alexis Connolly [mailto:aconnolly44@gmail.com]
Sent: Saturday, November 23, 2013 9:58 AM
To: Brestrup, Christine
Subject: Retreat concerns

The Landmark proposal threatens to extend frat row east and north through a quiet, semi-rural part of Amherst. To say that 500 feet is an effective noise barrier is disingenuous. Hope members of the Planning Board (not to mention the owners and editorial staff of the Gazette) will come stand on the spot being discussed so they can see for themselves the houses visible through the trees on Henry Street, Market Hill Road and Flat Hills Road and it wouldn't take much imagination to see what the future holds for North Amherst if this complex is built. . It would be one thing if cluster housing was being built for families, like the co-housing projects at Cherry Hill and on Pine Street, but it seems incredulous that the town of Amherst would endorse building housing expressly targeted students who love parties ANYWHERE in town! UMass is perhaps hoping to compete with the small liberal arts colleges for wealthier applicants but the Landmark approach, emphasizing luxury and recreation over academics, is wrong headed and misguided, ultimately a disservice both to the University and the town.

I hope you have had the opportunity to read the many news articles posted about the experiences of other towns that had less information and greater economic incentives (what excuse will the town of Amherst be able to offer a year or five years or ten years down the road?) to open the doors to developers to build similar high-end private student housing with DISASTROUS consequences not just for neighbors but for POLICE as well.

I hope the Amherst police and fire departments are allowed to weigh in on the decision.

As a reminder of a point that should end the discussion on its own (even if there were not so many other reasons to reject Landmark's plan) here is an excerpt from an article originating Orono, Maine, about graduation weekend last May:

Police are unable to regularly patrol a similar student housing development in Orono, Maine, since it is on private property. One of the Orono police sergeants said, "[We're] getting very tired of it... We're absorbing a lot of overtime lately. Obviously, it takes time away from family, friends and other activities for officers. It also takes away from us covering the rest of the town... If all of our resources are tied up there, we're not able to adequately protect and serve the rest of the town of Orono, which isn't fair to the rest of the people who live here."

From: Betsy Mathews [mailto:magistramathews@gmail.com]

Sent: Saturday, November 23, 2013 2:18 PM

To: Brestrup, Christine

Subject: Landmark proposal concerns

Ms Brestrup, A 30 resident of Henry St and a year round bicycle commuter from Cushman to downtown Amherst, I am concerned that Landmark's preliminary site plan does not include bike lanes within the development. Although the impact statement asserts that the project will encourage use of bicycles the lack of any bike infrastructure creates several conditions hazardous to cyclists. Without bike lanes cyclists must ride in the development's narrow streets to the rear of perpendicularly parked cars - a particularly dangerous scenario especially considering the hilly terrain.

Additionally, two streets from the Retreat intersect with town roads at a 10% grade and cyclists exiting the development will be gathering speed downhill as they enter Market Hill Road and Henry St where there are no bike lanes nor even shoulders and lines of sight are limited. Fifteen years of cycling experience in Cushman tell me that these intersections will pose a deadly risk to cyclists.

Betsy K Mathews
107 Henry St

From: Jody Shapiro [mailto:jodyshapirophd@gmail.com]
Sent: Saturday, November 23, 2013 3:48 PM
To: Brestrup, Christine
Subject: For Planning Board - concerns re the proposed Retreat

Dear Ms. Brestrup,

I am writing to voice my strong concerns about the impact the proposed Retreat would have on quality of life in my neighborhood. While I am a Shutesbury resident, I live just 1/2 mile over the town line on Cushman Road (which is Market Hill Road when it is in Amherst).

I don't really need to list all the reasons why the Retreat doesn't belong in this neighborhood. You will hear many, many articulate things from my neighbors. All I want to say is this:

1. This neighborhood is a rural outlying area far from the university and colleges. The quality of life centers on the large areas of peaceful woodland, the Atkins reservoir, the network of walking trails and streams, farms and fields, horses and wild turkeys. The influx of hundreds of unsupervised undergraduates to the neighborhood would be horrendously life-altering and property-value reducing for all of us who live here, and who moved here precisely because of the rural qualities of this R-O zoned, low density, area.
2. The proposed Retreat is a dorm. It is a students-only, dense collection of unsupervised teenagers. I devoutly hope that Land Court rules to stop the Retreat. I hope the Planning Board and the authorities in Amherst can see that allowing the Retreat to be built would be counter to the intent of existing zoning, and would set a dangerous precedent for the entire area. It certainly would be the kiss of death for the peace, privacy, and beauty of my rural neighborhood.

Thank you for taking this letter under consideration.

Respectfully,
Dr. Jody Shapiro
50 Cushman Rd.
Amherst, MA 01002

From: Dennis Gildea [mailto:dgildea@springfieldcollege.edu]

Sent: Sunday, November 24, 2013 12:57 PM

To: Brestrup, Christine

Subject: retreat thoughts

Dear Ms. Brestrup—

Asked by outsiders where I live, I've always been proud to tell them Amherst, explaining that it is a community with a great sense of its history, a community unlike too many others these days that works to preserve its historical buildings, its farmland, and its forested land.

Now comes the proposed Retreat, a commercial venture that runs counter to everything that I always felt Amherst held dear. I especially like the small village nature of the Cushman area, and I most definitely like the woods between Henry Street and Flat Hills Road. If I had my druthers, I'd leave this area untouched. But I'll be a realist and concede that the owner has the right to sell the land or to develop it herself. But a development on the scale of the proposed Retreat would be harmful to the area and the town in ways that I don't need to rehash. Others have done a thorough job of that.

Rather than the student-oriented Retreat, why not use some of the land for single-family houses? Wouldn't that be more in accordance with the nature of Cushman Village, not to mention the nature of nature? In other words, a compromise to settle a bitter dispute.

Sincerely,
Dennis Gildea
444 Flat Hills Road
Amherst

From: Richard Halgin [<mailto:rhalgin@gmail.com>]
Sent: Sunday, November 24, 2013 5:58 PM
To: Planning Department Email
Subject: The Retreat

Dear Ms. Brestrup,

I am writing to express my dismay/outrage that our town would even consider permitting the destruction of one of the most beautiful and serene parts of our town to allow the construction of a dormitory complex (which I understand would be in violation of zoning bylaws).

I have been a professor at UMass for 37 years, and I have the greatest of respect for the institution and for our students. However, I find it outrageous that a university with hundreds of unused acres would accept an outplacement plan that would disrupt town citizens, natural resources, and wildlife. Even more outrageous is the possibility that our town administrators would collude with this mercenary plan. Just last week I had the opportunity to visit the University of Kentucky in Lexington (the institution where our chancellor was a highly respected administrator). UK is building thousands of new dorm rooms on the campus and within a few minutes walk from academic buildings. Why wouldn't we ask UMass to do the same? Instead, we are considering destroying one of the most beautiful parts of our wonderful town. Why?! This is absolutely insane.

I also want to address the issue of safety. At least twice every day I drive on Henry Street, a bucolic, winding road where I often encounter walkers (including young children), runners, bicyclists, and citizens walking their dogs. I know that I must be especially alert, because at every bend I'm likely to encounter someone whose life could be endangered by one careless turn of the steering wheel. We're willing to allow a dormitory where hundreds of vehicles will imperil these individuals every day? Why?! This is insane.

Please put a stop to this insanity! If not, we will be moving to a more sane community as soon as we can get rid of our property in what was once a beautiful part of Amherst.

Richard Halgin
166 Shutesbury Road
Amherst, MA 01002

Richard P. Halgin, Ph.D.

From: Melissa Perot [mailto:missaperot@yahoo.com]
Sent: Saturday, November 23, 2013 5:19 PM
To: Planning Department Email
Subject: Landmark development

How is it that the cottage style social dormitory proposed for Cushman has reached this level of a preliminary proposal when the Amherst Zoning Bylaw is clear that such student complexes can only be built in the R-F zone. The Cows property considered is R-O and R-N. End of story one would think, but no!

Is a change of zoning to R-F being considered by the Planning Board?
Has a request to change the zoning to R-F been made by the landowner?
What legitimate process requires the town to engage in this attack on the State approved Amherst Zoning Bylaw?
Why is the Select Board and Planning Board not supporting their Bylaw and the residents of Cushman in denying the Landmark proposal?
Why are they unable to enforce the legal R-O and R-N zoning in this situation?

Meanwhile town money trickles into the project that for one straight forward legal reason should not be allowed. Costs for necessary studies, legal opinions and documents, research and consideration of requested waivers, mount daily to the point where allowing the Landmark project becomes increasingly attractive/necessary to those not directly affected, in the hope of eventually recouping in taxes some of the loss in Town expenses.

Please STOP the progress down this slippery slope of increasingly meaningless zoning as 'internal fixes' recreate zoning, overlays confuse the purpose of the zone, interpretations of uses are left entirely to the building inspector, and ENFORCE the bylaw as it exists and was intended.

From: Lucille Halgin [mailto:lhalgin@gmail.com]
Sent: Monday, November 25, 2013 7:58 PM
To: Planning Department Email; Brestrup, Christine
Subject: The Retreat

The sheer hypocrisy is overwhelming! Tree-hugging, salamander-protecting, wildlife-first Amherst will sell out to the corporate moguls of Landmark Realty, Cowls, and Jones! Why?!?

I am profoundly disappointed in this town which I have called "home" for almost 40 years! Stop this outrage immediately!

Lucille Halgin, PhD
166 Shutesbury Road
Amherst, MA 01002

From: Arleen Thomson [mailto:arleenthomson@gmail.com]

Sent: Monday, November 25, 2013 6:27 PM

To: Brestrup, Christine

Subject: My opposition to the Retreat

Dear Ms. Brestrup,

Thank you for reading my email. My husband and I built a beautiful home on Flat Hills Rd in 2005 which is of course zoned in an R-O district. If we thought a student development was potentially going to be across the street from us, we would've looked elsewhere. We have been residents of Amherst for the past 18 years and Leverett residents prior to that so this is our home and our community.

Aside from the threat of having our quality of life altered greatly and our major investment decrease significantly, I am quite concerned about the safety of the students as well as the residents.

The roads are very narrow without sidewalks in many areas. Oftentimes in the winter only one car can pass and snow piles obstruct one's view. Even with good snow tires and a very safe car, I do not drive down Flat Hills Rd in the winter as I have slid sideways more than once. Since the entrance now includes Flat Hills Rd, I worry about inexperienced drivers (often under the influence of alcohol) on this very steep road. Of course I am concerned about traffic in the entire area.

There is a preschool and a railroad crossing. These combined with excessive alcohol in an unsupervised area in the woods where friends are encouraged to join in for weekend parties all year round sounds like a recipe for disaster.

Sincerely,
Arleen Thomson

Dear Christine Brestrup and the Amherst Planning Board,

I am writing to express my opposition to the construction of The Retreat in Cushman Village. I am going to focus on three of my many concerns with this project that directly relate to the planning issues of the upcoming Dec. 4th meeting, namely the internal design of the student development.

Living—or should I say surviving—for 30 years on Morgan Circle has made two planning issues salient: steepness of roads and design of cul-de-sacs. The first, that of steepness, is of particular concern on Morgan Circle where we at times cannot drive up our street (and our driveway) because of ice coupled with the steepness of our roadway. Therefore, I am not in favor of Landmark's modification that involves increasing the incline of The Retreat's roads from 8% to 10%.

Second, the length of the cul-de-sacs is crucial, also for safety reasons. Fire and other emergency vehicles need a required length of roadway to be able to access and maneuver around an accident or other emergency situation. We live near a safely designed cul-de-sac on Hitching Post Rd. Thus Landmark should not be allowed to shorten the length of their cul-de-sacs.

I also want to add a third issue: that of downed trees. On Morgan Circle, we have witnessed several massive trees come crashing down in storms and block our ability to leave our homes for an entire day and in some cases severely damage our residences. Hence, I question the feasibility of building a dense student development midst or near our North Amherst terrain that is filled with extremely older, massively high trees that are particularly vulnerable to the recent trend of microburst storms. Consequentially, this large group of students may not be able to leave The Retreat or use nearby access roads to get to classes, jobs, and other commitments in a timely way.

Sincerely,

Fanny Rothschild
26 Morgan Circle
Amherst, MA.

From: Roxanne Bogart [mailto:rox.bogart@gmail.com]
Sent: Monday, December 02, 2013 4:41 PM
To: Brestrup, Christine
Subject: Comments on The Retreat

Dear Ms. Brestrup:

We live at 51 Overlook Drive in Amherst in the High Point Neighborhood, very close to Cushman Village and Flat Hills Road. We are writing to comment on the initial plans for the proposed student housing development submitted by the Georgia-based Landmark Properties Company for your review.

We would like to say up front that we vehemently oppose this kind of development in a part of Amherst that is currently zoned residential outlying (R-O) for the sole purpose of protecting the natural environment and cultural/historic character of the area. It is the rural beauty and historic and cultural uniqueness of Cushman Village and surrounding natural areas that attracted us -- and many who live here -- to this area.

I would like to quote from Amherst's own zoning bylaw statement of purpose. Please take special note of the phrases I have put in bold:

*"The purpose of all residential zones is to promote a suitable environment for residential life through the provision of recreational, religious and educational facilities as basic elements of a balanced neighborhood, **to stabilize and protect the essential characteristics of existing residential development**, and to foster development that is compatible with the other natural and built characteristics of the area."*

In the past, our town government created zoning bylaw 3.326. The reason our elected officials created this zoning bylaw was to protect residential outlying (R-O) neighborhoods from extreme concentrations of student populations.

Our Select Board has chosen to ignore the wisdom reflected in the zoning bylaw, and has wrongly considered the Landmark Properties development in Cushman Village to be allowed "by right." The Board should be required to revisit this decision in light of the clear wording and intent of our zoning bylaw.

Even if this oversight by the Select Board remains uncorrected, according to the basic zoning laws of Amherst, the stated character of R-O zoning is "a transition between lower density (farm and forest areas) and residential neighborhoods."

In order to preserve this character of R-O districts, the zoning requires that an ordinary home lot size not be less than 30,000 sq. ft. A cluster housing lot size is limited to a 20,000 square foot minimum lot size—which is already 10,000 sq. ft. less than the minimum allowed for ordinary non-cluster homes in R-O districts.

And yet Landmark Properties is asking for a decrease in this minimum to 15,000 sq. ft. This

alteration would so grossly increase the density of student housing units that this zone would become not only more concentrated than even R-N districts—it would be just barely less dense than the highly concentrated R-G town center housing (12,000 sq. ft. min.).

In case it is not obvious, I want to point out to the Planning Department and Select Board that the requested increase in density goes against what R-O zoning is meant to provide for those citizens who have chosen to live and invest our lives here in this R-O zone of Cushman Village and neighboring area. Landmark Properties' request for modification on lot size not only goes counter to the essential characteristics of Cushman Village, it destroys them.

The number and nature of the modifications that are now being requested by Landmark Properties are unprecedented and extreme. Landmark Properties is asking for changes that create steep narrow roads, no room for bicycles, dense housing, long roads to cul-de-sacs, and small cul-de-sac diameters. For safety and character reasons, our zoning laws do not allow these modifications.

All of the difficulties inherent in concentrated student housing areas would be magnified in Cushman Village and neighboring areas. The traffic sounds, pollution, party noise, light pollution, and other disturbances would be extremely damaging to the natural and cultural/historic significance of the area.

The proposed area of intense concentration is within one of the largest unfragmented blocks of forest land in Amherst (the largest in North Amherst), known principally for the migration of mole salamanders through the tunnels installed for their safe passage under Henry Street. The entire area proposed for development is used by a variety of wildlife in addition to the salamanders and is designated in the Open Space and Recreation Plan as a possible Forest Reserve adjacent to the Cushman Brook riparian corridor.

I would also like to remind the Planning Board of the following points taken from the Town's Master Plan and Open Space and Recreation Plan -- these points emphasize the importance of maintaining R-O zoning in combination with conservation action.

The area proposed for development is:

- identified in the Master Plan as "potential future protected land" currently zoned residential.
- identified on the Conceptual Land Use map as a "potential priority area for conservation" in part due to the salamander crossings, which would be severely impacted.
- identified in the Open Space and Recreation Plan as a Possible Forest Reserve adjacent to the Cushman Brook riparian corridor.
- adjacent to the Mill River and Cushman Brook Corridors: "The Mill River below Puffer's Pond and the Cushman Brook above, form the core of an extensive greenway in North Amherst stretching from Leverett to Hadley. Both contain above-average water quality and are known for their recreational value to Amherst residents and visitors alike. This corridor is

significant to many nesting bird species as well as any number of mammals including moose, turkey, deer and bear.

-- Guiding the town's actions is a 10-year forest management plan that includes the following objective: "Emphasize that large contiguous blocks of land, including farmland, are also basic building blocks of wildlife corridors. The Town has intact corridors along the Mount Holyoke Range, through Lawrence Swamp into East Amherst and Shutesbury and Pelham, and along the Mill River/ Cushman Brook Corridor, and needs to work to protect these networks of open space from the impacts of development."

Our zoning rules are there for a reason. They provide clear legal structures that were put in place to protect us from changes that demolish the safety and character of the neighborhoods we have chosen to live in and the natural environments we value and that provide a high quality of life for all inhabitants. We depend on you, our officials, to make sure that these legal structures are utilized.

I urge you to act on our zoning law's mandate to "***stabilize and protect the essential characteristics of existing residential development***" and only allow growth in R-O zones that is "***compatible with the other natural and built characteristics of the area.***"

I urge you to PLEASE STOP the Landmark development from becoming a reality.
Thank you for your sincere consideration of these comments.

Regards,

Roxanne Bogart & Scott Schwenk

DATE: 2 December 2013

FROM: Sherry Poirrier
290 Flat Hills Road

TO: Christine Brestrup, Senior Amherst Planner & Amherst Planning Board

RE: LANDMARK PRELIMINARY PLAN

I am writing to provide some comments on the Landmark Preliminary Plan submitted to the Amherst Planning Board. I hope you will consider my comments along with those voiced by concerned and thoughtful neighbors and community members, in both private and public town forums. I am opposed to this project on many levels, but will keep my comments relevant to the planning aspects in your purview. Thank you for your consideration.

I wish to address some specific points in the road plan, directly impacting our abutting property. I will summarize them here, so that my opinion is concise and relevant to your deliberations. But, I urge you to take the few moments to read Appendix I to this document, which provides a personal context and perspective. Please see the annotated map in Appendix II for reference.

1) SECONDARY ENTRANCE ROAD IS INAPPROPRIATE FOR FLAT HILLS SITE:

Our small one-acre property directly abuts the north side of the proposed secondary entrance to the Retreat off of Flat Hills Rd (Appendix II: red rectangle), currently a logging access road. Previous plans did not have an entrance here, and each subsequent plan pushed the unit clusters closer and closer to property lines in this area. Now, in this Preliminary Plan, an entrance road has been introduced that closely circuits two sides of our property line, but it also includes the construction of several of the residential units directly on the entrance road (Appendix II: blue oval). This is unacceptable - the cramped proximity of the roads and of these units, squeezed into this little by way, with little or no buffer areas to abutters is so very close as to make for substantial noise pollution (from multiple tenants, along with their cars, friends, parties) and light pollution (from exterior lighting and significantly from turning traffic and roadway activity).

Why is this necessary? What benefit is it to have a road egress from an intrusive cluster subdivision of hundreds of people and their cars, onto Flat Hills Road, a quiet, peaceful road, with only local traffic from homeowners. During the day and evening, there are many bikers, and pedestrians, with dogs, strollers and children in tow, walking the length Flat Hills, visiting with neighbors, enjoying the route and often accessing the conservation area next to the Comings family Tree Farm. At night, we have only one street light between this area and the winding blind curve hill leading down to the stop signs and junctions of Shutesbury Rd and Henry/North East Street. This is part of the charm of being on one of the oldest roads in town – a road that I would venture, student drivers would not navigate with caution, but with speed, and perhaps even the distractions of texting and alcohol.

2) INADEQUATE BUFFERS TO ABUTTERS FROM PROPOSED UNITS ON FLAT HILLS ENTRANCE ROAD:

Many of the abutters/ homeowners on Flat Hills have lots of some acreage, with their homes sited well within their property, creating a natural buffer from the development at the back of their property lines; others, especially some of the oldest houses and farms on the road, are sited closer to the road.

(cont. next page)

This proposed entrance road, and the units on that parcel, are placed directly in the middle of this lovely area, creating light pollution, noise and traffic which will be an environmental and aesthetic detriment to the quality of life, rural character and property value of the Flat Hills neighborhood.

If this development comes to pass, there needs to be limits on how much this development insinuates itself beyond its perimeter and into the surrounding properties, especially smaller properties such as ours, where the visual intrusion of that road is apparent day and night from our house and those of our neighbors. Please note that the other entrance roads (Henry St. and Market Hill) are free of any residential units for some distance into the development from the main roads (probably due to the topography) keeping noise and light pollution away from existing residences. I suggest that these units at the Flat Hills entrance, be eliminated from the plan.

3) CONFIGURATION OF FLAT HILLS ENTRANCE ROAD:

The Flat Hills entrance road configuration itself winds its way into the development by hugging the property lines of our property (Appendix II: see purple arrow) and passing directly off the SW corner of our lot, taking a sharp left into the main development. This road conformation creates an unnecessarily intrusive nighttime penetration of car headlights into adjacent properties (especially ours and our neighbor at 300 Flat Hills) from both directions. A reasonable modification would be to shift the roadway trajectory to pass in a straight line as far away as possible from abutter's residences on both sides (Appendix II: see yellow arrow).

The design should have modifications to provide a more environmentally sensitive design and minimize light spill, excessive glare or improper directional orientation, and prevent night lighting that adversely impacts adjacent properties and the neighborhood in general. I believe these issues are components of what is most desirable according to the Amherst Town Master Plan, reflecting a "sensitive buffer property boundary relationship with abutters" and with their residences.

Appendix I : Personal Comments

I have lived in Amherst for almost 40 years, 34 of those years as a condominium owner in Echo Hill. For well over a year my sister and I looked to buy a house together in Amherst...and we couldn't find what we wanted, and could afford, in the single family residence market. That is when we decided to pool our resources, sell our condos in Echo Hill, and purchased from Cows Lumber, a one acre wooded lot on the west side of Flat Hills Road, adjacent to their logging road. We loved the low density area, and the ambiance resulting from the R-O zoning. The mix of farmland, wooded lots and dispersed residences was just what we were looking for.

Our household represents one of those of moderate income, which have had such difficulty in affording single home ownership in Amherst. We built a modest new home scaled to our needs and our budget – It was an investment in our retirement home, a place to be creative and enjoy the quiet natural beauty for which this area of Amherst is so well known. We were so glad to leave the clusters of condos and rentals, with their lack of community and continuity behind. We moved in late March 2013, having already met many of our friendly new neighbors, and just in time to receive the first public notice of Landmark's development intentions for this area. Of course, we knew nothing of this during our purchase of the land (in late 2011), or during the subsequent construction of our house (2012-2013). It was a complete shock to us! And it forever altered our perception of what this endeavor means to us, both personally (feelings of dismay that we had made our decision in ignorance of the impact this would have on our quality of life) and financially (negative home value investment).

(cont. next page)

Appendix II : Annotated Map of Significant Features Exhibit



From: Andreana Lemmon [mailto:lemmona@earthlink.net]

Sent: Wednesday, November 27, 2013 4:18 PM

To: Brestrup, Christine

Subject: letter of concern

Dear Christine Brestrup:

There are many reasons why I oppose the proposed Landmark development in Cushman Forest. First and foremost I do not understand how the town can even consider such a development in R-O zoning. It is clearly for the purpose of student housing, which is not allowed in this low-density neighborhood. My husband and I purchased our home on Morgan Circle four years ago precisely for the reason that it was close to campus but not too close. We have a couple of homes on our circle that are rented to students and have experienced the late night parties, added traffic and parking issues it entails.

Secondly I believe that any new development should be embarked upon with very careful consideration of the future. The roads and homes should be built and suitable for non-student housing in case the development falls on hard times and need to be repurposed. I believe that scarcity of oil/high cost of fuel could become a very serious issue in twenty years and driving to campus/busing students may no longer look like such a great idea. I would like to see Cushman Forest preserved as it is but if that's not possible I think that affordable housing makes more sense than student housing. The students should be housed on campus or at least within walking distance!

Lastly I would like to mention the general condition of the roads surrounding Cushman Forest. Pine and Henry streets are too narrow for the existing traffic and were not built to accommodate bicycle and pedestrian traffic.

The town and university need to establish a master plan of how to deal with student housing that will benefit the whole community well into the future. The Landmark proposal will destroy the character of the Cushman/North Amherst neighborhoods. Please oppose this development for the sake of our town!

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Andreana Lemmon
Amherst resident

From: Lynne Baker [mailto:lr baker@philos.umass.edu]
Sent: Wednesday, November 27, 2013 9:38 AM
To: Brestrup, Christine
Subject: The Retreat, again

Dear Ms. Brestrup,

Earlier I sent a message for Planning Board expressing some concerns about the proposed new facilities for students in Cushman. I am writing again, because another matter just sticks in my craw about the Preliminary Plan Development Impact Statement: the disingenuous use of the word 'family' to describe the rental units. (1) Look at the floor plans. The lay-outs are floor plans for college suites, not for families. Oakview has more bathrooms than beds. I know of no family of any kind who lives in such arrangements. (2) I understand that you plan to rent out your space by the bed; to my knowledge, family rentals are never rent-a-bed.

At first, this may seem like a merely semantic matter, but I suspect that it is symbolic of the slippery way that Landmark operates. If this project is approved, it will constitute an agreement of trust between the town of Amherst and Landmark. From what I have seen so far, I do not believe that such trust is warranted.

I appreciate your sending my last email to the Planning Board, and I ask you to send this one too.

Sincerely,

Lynne Baker
137 Shutesbury Road
Amherst, MA 01002

From: Daniel Reif [mailto:daniel@homeplanner.com]
Sent: Tuesday, November 26, 2013 9:16 PM
To: Select Board; Brestrup, Christine; Planning Department Email
Subject: Cushman student housing project

To whom it may concern:

In 1980, I built my own house, partially as a house raising, at 11 Hitching Post Rd. in the University Heights subdivision of Cushman. My house is next to the original farmhouse from which the land was made into this subdivision.

Several years after I moved in the ownership of the farmhouse changed. Within days of this change the farmhouse was gutted and I noticed a row of new electrical meters mounted on the side of the house. I researched the town zoning laws that limited the number of apartments, contacted the town officers and asked them to enforce the law. (I have degrees in architecture and planning.) The town informed the owner that only two apartments were permitted. I know that if the town did not enforce the zoning laws then there would be many more apartments.

Now, Landmark wants to build a large student housing project in Cushman on land where the zoning bylaw clearly does not permit student housing. The property is zoned R-O, Outlining Residential, under which Zoning Bylaw 3.326 does not allow "social dormitories" or "similar use associated with Amherst College, Hampshire College or the University of Massachusetts." I again ask the town to enforce the zoning laws. As with the farmhouse conversion, I expect the owner to present the case as to why they should be allowed to circumvent the zoning laws. I count on the Town of Amherst to not allow this.

The land where Landmark wants to build its student housing project is zoned for single family housing. I recently experienced the real estate options in Amherst as my son and his family just purchased a single family house in Cushman's other subdivision on Rosemary Street.

What I learned is that there is a significant shortage of building lots and recently constructed single family houses in the Cushman area. The town's zoning for this land is correct and must be enforced.

Thank you,
Daniel Reif

11 Hitching Post Rd.
Amherst, MA

Barbara L. Davis

336 Market Hill Road
Amherst, MA 01002

November 27, 2013

Dear Ms. Brestrup and the Amherst Planning Board:

I am writing in regard to construction of The Retreat. My husband and I live on Market Hill Road having made a choice years ago to raise our family in this area of town.

When my son was nine, I asked him if he thought we had made a mistake, if we should have moved to town to be closer to his classmates. "No! It's beautiful here." One day I noticed new photographs on his camera only to have him confess that he had snuck out of the house after waking to his alarm clock and had ridden his bike down to Atkins Reservoir to take pictures of the mist at sunrise. A kid can do that in an RO zone.

When my husband and I become older and no longer want to drive, we will move to a denser residential district, and we hope that another family will come to enjoy this lovely RO one. Another child will perhaps sneak out to take pictures too. The town needs to maintain discrete, intact districts.

I urge you to hold fast to the zoning that is in place. We are not naive. We know that times change and more houses will come to North Amherst, but The Retreat is far too big, too dense, and represents the loss of a district and loss of control of our zoning. There will be no going back. The traffic and inevitable increase in accidents at the many small intersections will be here to stay. Accidents on the steep hills of Flat Hills Road on icy nights will continue year after year; biking and walking and running will be too dangerous to enjoy in the whole area; the quiet will be over; accidents involving the kids from The Retreat (and they are "kids") with the train tracks will be all too familiar news; the safety of a large number of unsupervised young people will be compromised, sometimes with tragic consequence, year after year. Beyond aesthetics and quality of life concerns, there are too many safety issues to overlook. We can't pretend that we didn't see the consequences coming.

There is no way that the infrastructure and culture of the North Amherst area can accommodate an influx of residents and scale of development this large.

Sincerely,

Barbara Davis

**Ira Bryck
255 Strong Street
Amherst, MA 01002**

November 20, 2013

To the Amherst Planning Board
Amherst, MA
Submitted via email to Christine Brestrup
brestrupc@amherstma.gov

Dear Members of the Amherst Planning Board, and Town Planning Department,

Now that you are at the stage of considering the preliminary plan submitted for the Retreat brand student development in the R-O zone of Cushman forest, I implore you to be strict in your responsibilities in "promoting the health, safety, convenience and general welfare of the inhabitants of the Town of Amherst, and encouraging the most appropriate use of land throughout Amherst." That quote, as you must know, is the description of the purpose of the town's zoning bylaws.

The Landmark company, from Georgia, is hoping that the Amherst Planning Board will allow several dimensional modifications, so they can build the largest subdivision Amherst has seen since Amherst Woods. The reductions to lot sizes, frontages, and setbacks, and increases of road lengths ending in cul de sacs, provide for much higher density housing than clustering was intended to permit. This increase is needed so they can squeeze in housing for almost 700 students and over 700 cars in a forest strewn with wetlands, streams and rivers, unbuildable contours and bedrock, not to mention abutted by salamanders, fragile roads and a National Historic District.

As the Planning Board, I realize you have certain rights and authority, but not others. You cannot reject this project as inconsistent with the town's desires, as was recently done in Tuscaloosa, Alabama (named Most Liveable City in America by the US Conference of Mayors) and Blacksburg, Virginia (named by BusinessWeek as Best Place in the U.S. to Raise Kids, and by Southern Living magazine as Best College Town in the South). You cannot deny this project outright, even though in the last round of hearings your conclusive comments were that this is a bad project in a bad location.

But you do have the right to hold your ground, and be a board that is proactive in its thought and action. You do have the right to not give more than the law prescribes. You do have the right to hold them to the subdivision regulations, also emphasized by the Master Plan, that the development maintains the character of the neighborhood. You do have the right to insist that this be an "honest" project, by ensuring that Landmark needs to work within limits that the Planning Board thinks are wise, NOT by surrendering to Landmark the modifications that makes their sub-par plan suddenly viable. For the Planning Board to yield on these modifications is to allow the project to be built at the expense of Amherst's residents, reputation, and future.

I respect the complexity of what you must decide, in reaching the decisions that are fair to all concerned. You must be concerned with the rights of property owners and private business; and the intricate matter of supply and demand of affordable housing and student housing. I wish you insight and strength in applying your authority to protect real property values of your neighbors in Cushman, but also town-wide. This is not a NIMBY issue, unless you consider that our burgeoning small town is one big back yard, both yours and mine.

Sincerely

Ira Bryck

From: Lucille Halgin [mailto:lhalgin@gmail.com]

Sent: Monday, November 25, 2013 7:58 PM

To: Planning Department Email; Brestrup, Christine

Subject: The Retreat

The sheer hypocrisy is overwhelming! Tree-hugging, salamander-protecting, wildlife-first Amherst will sell out to the corporate moguls of Landmark Realty, Cowls, and Jones! Why?!?

I am profoundly disappointed in this town which I have called "home" for almost 40 years! Stop this outrage immediately!

Lucille Halgin, PhD
166 Shutesbury Road
Amherst, MA 01002

Brestrup, Christine

From: Veronica Rogers Everett [tahoe20@gmail.com]
Sent: Thursday, December 05, 2013 9:23 AM
To: Brestrup, Christine
Subject: 12/4 Planning Board Reflections

Hi Ms. Brestrup,

To try and keep it brief--I wanted to say first of all, that I was very impressed with the Board's handling of the meeting last night. As a newcomer to Amherst (18 months ago) I didn't really know what our local 'politics' would be like, but was impressed with the Board and feel that no matter which way the Retreat goes, Amherst representatives will do their due diligence.

2 Major points that I didn't mention last night because there was not time.
I live on Overlook Dr. Off of Flat Hills and High Point .

1) I am also one of those "young families" that Amherst is trying to attract and retain. We moved here after 11 years of living in intense and busy Washington DC precisely to live in the woods and have quiet, away from sprawl. If we wanted "urban" life (students, cars, noise) we would have moved into downtown Amherst. There is no doubt in my mind the Retreat would irrevocably change the whole Cushman area. Flat Hills and Henry Sts cannot support those cars and those inexperienced drivers. They are narrow with no shoulders.

2) I wanted to specifically mention the "culture" of Landmark's properties and how its clashes with anything ever found in New England, especially rural New England. I lived for a year in Atlanta, Georgia. Mr. Williams ideas are very familiar to me. I lived in one of those gated apartment communities that is sprawled all over the South. It was attached housing versus a Duplex, but the whole plan was the same (perpendicular parking, amenity centers). The South has more room for those developments, we do not. It is not in line with our neighborhood design and our sense of community. These developments isolate people, and in this case, isolate them in the woods. Mr. Williams comments while well presented, struck me as a true culture clash and one that will hurt the character of North Amherst for years to come.

Lastly--I am a psychotherapist working in downtown Amherst. My population..teenagers and college students. I love this age population. They are my bread and butter. So I say on good authority and without ugly judgement that Amherst is kidding themselves if they think that these students in such a large isolated cluster in the woods will behave themselves and that a manager on site from Landmark (until Landmark sells it) will be able to manage all those students. Amherst police regularly get hit with bottles and other junk. How will The Retreat stay well policed and organized when its private roads with one onsite manager. It either needs to be public roads or Landmark needs to come up with a better plan.

Thanks for your time,
Veronica Everett
10 Overlook Dr.

Mary Taft and Leslie Smith
538 Market Hill Rd
Amherst, MA 01002

December 4, 2013

Dear Town of Amherst Planning Board;

My husband and I love our home on Market Hill Rd. We treasure our rural community and its natural beauty that so enriches our life. For the 27 years that we have owned our Market Hill Rd. house, we have happily paid our property tax despite the fact that we have sketchy fire protection (The nearest hydrant is so far down the hill it's not likely a fire fighting aid), incredibly bumpy roads (I had a flat tire from a pot hole earlier this spring), no town water, no town sewer, no gas service and luckily very few visits from the Amherst police, fire or ambulance services. In fact, we have had a very light footprint on the Town of Amherst resources. We rarely complain. We attend church at First Congregational Church, Amherst. We love the community of Amherst. We love working at the University of Massachusetts and we treasure working with young adults.

We also own a home at 167 Henry St. as an investment property. Our Henry Street house abuts the proposed Retreat development. Our daughter lives in this house and we rent rooms to two students and one young professional. The Henry Street house has never had a complaint from neighbors or the police. The house does have town water, town sewer and a nearby fire hydrant.

We are deeply concerned about the proposed Retreat development. We strongly support the Save Historic Cushman community group. There is an upwelling of opposition to the Retreat from North Amherst residents. The Town of Amherst with its historically strong stance against development seems to have turned a deaf ear to the local residents and opened the door wide to Cinda Jones and the Retreat development plan.

We worry that the proposed development will rip apart the fabric of our beloved rural community. The Town seems to eagerly embrace the development plans because of the financial lure of benefits bestowed by the Retreat development team. Please weigh carefully the costs and benefits of this proposal. You may find that those of us who treasure our rural community will flee once traffic increases, safety declines, property values plunge, Hobart Hoe Down style parties appear at the Retreat and at Atkins Reservoir requiring town police, fire and emergency services to beat a frequent path to our beloved corner of North Amherst.

Please listen to all of the concerns of your North Amherst residents; weigh the true costs and benefits of this project and stand firm on the principal of preserving a precious and fragile rural community.

Sincerely

Mary Taft and Leslie Smith

Mary Taft and Leslie Smith
538 Market Hill Rd
Amherst, MA 01002

December 4, 2013

Dear Town of Amherst Planning Board;

My husband and I love our home on Market Hill Rd. We treasure our rural community and its natural beauty that so enriches our life. For the 27 years that we have owned our Market Hill Rd. house, we have happily paid our property tax despite the fact that we have sketchy fire protection (The nearest hydrant is so far down the hill it's not likely a fire fighting aid), incredibly bumpy roads (I had a flat tire from a pot hole earlier this spring), no town water, no town sewer, no gas service and luckily very few visits from the Amherst police, fire or ambulance services. In fact, we have had a very light footprint on the Town of Amherst resources. We rarely complain. We attend church at First Congregational Church, Amherst. We love the community of Amherst. We love working at the University of Massachusetts and we treasure working with young adults.

We also own a home at 167 Henry St. as an investment property. Our Henry Street house abuts the proposed Retreat development. Our daughter lives in this house and we rent rooms to two students and one young professional. The Henry Street house has never had a complaint from neighbors or the police. The house does have town water, town sewer and a nearby fire hydrant.

We are deeply concerned about the proposed Retreat development. We strongly support the Save Historic Cushman community group. There is an upwelling of opposition to the Retreat from North Amherst residents. The Town of Amherst with its historically strong stance against development seems to have turned a deaf ear to the local residents and opened the door wide to Cinda Jones and the Retreat development plan.

We worry that the proposed development will rip apart the fabric of our beloved rural community. The Town seems to eagerly embrace the development plans because of the financial lure of benefits bestowed by the Retreat development team. Please weigh carefully the costs and benefits of this proposal. You may find that those of us who treasure our rural community will flee once traffic increases, safety declines, property values plunge, Hobart Hoe Down style parties appear at the Retreat and at Atkins Reservoir requiring town police, fire and emergency services to beat a frequent path to our beloved corner of North Amherst.

Please listen to all of the concerns of your North Amherst residents; weigh the true costs and benefits of this project and stand firm on the principal of preserving a precious and fragile rural community.

Sincerely

Mary Taft and Leslie Smith

